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From Base Organization to Mass Mobilization
in Nicaragua : the Case of Esteli

- by -

Myrna Hernandez

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts in the University of Durham

May 1982



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Abstract

This thesis is an empirical analysis of the factors which led to the emergence of the liberation movements of Nicaragua which resulted in the fall of the dictatorship of the Somozas, in July 1979. The Somoza family's reign of more than 45 years in power, contributed to a deepening of the economic and political contradictions which existed between and among the various social sectors of the country.

The thesis provides a background chapter which explores these contradictions and shows how Nicaragua became dependent on the international market. The internal political conflicts between the so-called Nicaraguan liberals and conservatives and the precarious conditions of the labouring population are outlined to provide the setting against which the nationalist struggle of Augusto C. Sandino arose in the 1920's. This early struggle was to inspire and contribute to the ideological platform of organizations like the FSLN which led the recent anti-dictatorial struggle.

The thesis shows how the liberation movement encompassed the participation of groups from diverse social sectors. It examines how the shaping and consolidating of the movement necessitated a whole process of mass mobilization and of decision making from the political and military forces involved. The attitudes taken by the various groups towards the dictatorship and what should be done about it and in what ways change could be achieved and what direction it should take, reflected the class position of the various groups. The thesis shows how, in the process of incorporating the masses into the liberation

struggle, certain groups came to play an outstanding role. During the task of raising consciousness in the population various groups involved in the task, such as the progressive sectors of the Church, women's organizations, workers' organizations, students, peasant groups, and various others came together in a common cause.

In order to examine this process of convergence and to highlight the factors which precipitated the liberation movement and the eventual national uprising, case material from the city of Esteli, collected during fieldwork, is presented. The struggle brought the interchange of experiences and of relationships among individuals from various social and economic strata . Attention is drawn to the way in which people's perspectives changed during the pre-war and war conditions and how they adapted to the needs of an altering situation.

The thesis also attempts to show how, after the liberation, social reconstruction took place and how popular participation was required to fulfill the short and longer term goals of the new government and the FSLN. The significance of mass organizations for this process of change is highlighted. Popular participation is outlined against the background of political and economic obstacles faced by the country, and against the contradictions arising from the new political and economic forces and alliances. I show how the organizations created during the guerrilla struggle are developing and becoming the pillars for production, and mass mobilization and participation in a new democratic process.

Acknowledgements

In carrying out my fieldwork and writing up the present work I incurred a number of personal and institutional debts in Guatemala, Nicaragua and England. First, thanks are due to the following institutions: the University of San Carlos of Guatemala for its aid in financing my post-graduate studies; the present Nicaraguan Government and the FSLN without whose support it would not have been possible to explore the ongoing revolutionary process; the Department of Anthropology at the University of Durham, which granted me leave of absence to pursue my research in Nicaragua.

It is beyond me to thank individually the people of Esteli who have in many ways constituted the base for writing this thesis. I would like to thank Fernando Cardenal and Emilio Baltodano of the Nicaraguan Government from whom I made my first links with the people of Nicaragua. In the same way, I want to give my special and sincere thanks to Ricardo Falla who through his friendship and assistance made possible, both my first fieldwork experience and the learning of some of the skills of the profession.

I am also particularly indebted to my supervisor Professor Norman Long who through his suggestions and criticisms helped me to clarify my thoughts and put them down on paper. His guidance while I worked with him was of great value in shaping the product of the research. Similarly, I would like to express my special acknowledgements to Ann Long for she did most, if not all, of the language corrections and gave me encouragement throughout the time I was completing this work.

My debts are also extended to my Latin American friends of Durham whose discussions, suggestions and courage contributed to its finish. Also thanks are due to Ann Mitchell who patiently did all the typing at very short notice, and to Peter Sluglett and John McGuinness who read the proofs.

Last but not least, my thanks are due to my husband Victor, and my daughter Lucrecia who gave me their moral support throughout my stay in England and Nicaragua.

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Introduction

The main concern of the present work is to analyse the factors which led to the formation of the broad movement that overthrew the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua in July 1979, and to document some aspects of the process of social reconstruction during the first year in power of the Sandinista National Liberation Front - FSLN.

Although the discussion raises issues relevant to more general theories of social change, power, dependency and revolution, the thesis is essentially an empirical work which attempts to explore one particular revolutionary process.

In order to comprehend the emergence of the liberation movement in Nicaragua, I have provided an outline of the country's recent economic and political history. The need for structural change does not arise fortuitously but is the response of social groups to the gradual accumulation of a complex series of social and economic contradictions. I have also tried to show how the ruling groups in Nicaragua came to exhaust their alternatives in attempting to solve the general political and economic crisis.

The Central American region is an area characterised by strong foreign interference in national affairs. However, the increasingly open intrusion of the US government throughout the region has generated a series of reactions from diverse social and economic groups. Thus I have also discussed US strategies of domination and the reaction of various social sectors to them.

Given the fact that the birth of the Nicaraguan liberation movement was an organized response to the country's political and economic crisis, it is fundamentally important to identify the factors which made such a response possible. Hence, I have tried to analyse the conflicts among and between diverse social groups, and to understand why and how they came to combine to stand against the Somoza regime.

The anti-dictatorial struggle went through various phases and entailed the work of many organizations in attempting to mobilise the masses. In the following analysis I have described the main organizations which managed to convince various sectors of the population of the necessity of questioning the social order using a number of different methods. The significance of Sandino's struggle, the role of the FSLN, the participation of the Church and the way in which each organized themselves to face the different situations are included.

Special attention is also given to the kinds of changes which took place after the fall of Somoza. This theme is closely related to the question of the political ideology promoted by the leading organization, and to its consequences for the new national political and economic system. Moreover, as the process currently being implemented aims to build the grounds for further structural changes, I have focused on those organizations that are most important for the task of social reconstruction. I have also examined the motives for individual participation in this process of change, and discuss people's expectations before the ultimate triumph of the FSLN.

To accomplish this aim, and in order to reduce the "anon-

ymity" of the role of the "masses" in the whole process, I have chosen to present individuals' accounts of their own participation. By means of personal descriptions, one is able to grasp the effects of the existing economic and political contradictions at different moments. It also permits one to study individuals' changing perceptions and make an analysis of the local and national context, and the effects of specific events on people's patterns of behaviour.

My individual accounts were collected in the city of Esteli, in the north-west of Nicaragua. I first visited Esteli because of its reputation for having shown a very high degree of participation during the struggle. When I arrived there, the popular local slogans were "Esteli three times the martyr", "Esteli, first in the insurrection" and "Esteli three times heroic". And when I left Esteli after a six month stay in January 1981, the slogan was "Esteli first in the insurrection, first in the Literacy Campaign, first in the Popular Militias". These assertions had a basis in fact. Esteli had achieved first place in the first National Congress of the Literacy Campaign in June 1980 and had been chosen as the first city to organize its own popular militia. Later on, I also observed that the level of consciousness among social groups in Esteli concerning participation in the country's process of reconstruction was particularly high, especially in comparison with other towns I visited.

Another aspect which attracted my attention was the social composition of Esteli's leadership in the mass organizations. Most of them were from the area itself and from relatively

humble backgrounds. The leaders of the CST¹ were mainly tobacco workers or had been shoemakers (now working full-time); most of the CDS leaders had been either tailors or workers in garment-making workshops; the leaders of the women's organization AMNLAE were mostly housewives from low economic sectors and the leaders of the peasant organization ATC had been agricultural labourers. There was also a broad participation of elements from other sectors such as students, teachers, clerks and so on who devoted a large part of their time to organizational activities.

The interviews were initially conducted with the leaders of mass organizations; but later I was able to widen the sample to include other informants who presented their views on the processes of social change. During my conversations I observed that individuals' retrospective accounts of the liberation struggle were marked by a high degree of optimism and pride. They were convinced of Esteli's broad and decisive participation as well as of the effectiveness of their organizations in confronting the repression and the uprisings.

It was clear that in spite of most people's recognition of the importance of solidarity aid from foreign countries, this did not prevent them from being somewhat guarded in the information they were prepared to give to foreigners. An outsider was normally asked why he was staying in the town, his occupation and his specific interest in the country's revolutionary process; many informants also asked for some form of personal identification before chatting or providing specific information. The people of Esteli had had previous experience of the distorted

¹ For abbreviations and a glossary see pp. 193-199.

use by foreigners of locally provided information. Thus individuals tended to want to satisfy themselves about the ultimate purpose of the interviews.

The oral accounts were collected in the course of directed interviews and informal conversations. Some statistical data was collected from available local and national studies made by various municipal and government institutions, and much of the information was also gathered in the course of participant observation in meetings or activities to which I was invited.

During my stay in Esteli I lived with families whose members were profoundly involved with the FSLN. This helped me to see all the dimensions of the process of change and the multiple difficulties faced by organizations wishing to accelerate it. In the houses where I lived I could also observe the constant visits of persons from all social sectors (peasants, workers, priests, artisans, students and so forth) to discuss common political and economic concerns. This experience enabled me to gain a deeper insight into the broad character of participation at several levels and the degree of commitment of individuals to the solution of everyday problems.

One of my difficulties was the collection of precise data on such matters as population, land extension, and the number of losses during the war. Frequently, when I tried to cross-check my data against other similar sources the figures did not coincide. Nevertheless my uncertainties about the reliability of these statistics do not materially alter any of the conclusions I have reached, and I have in any case been very circumspect in their use.

The study of the contemporary process of change in Nicaragua has been divided into five chapters. Chapter I analyses the historical, political and recent socio-economic background of the country, and forms an introduction to the case material presented in the rest of the thesis. Chapter II describes the main features of economic and social development in Esteli before the uprisings began. Chapter III contains a number of different accounts by individuals of their experiences and forms of participation during the period of mobilization before the first uprising, and also shows the various strategies adopted by different groups in order to survive the war. Chapter IV analyses the economic and political situation in Nicaragua after the fall of the Somoza family, the effects of the war on Esteli itself, and the process of social reconstruction which was taking place there. The concluding chapter draws attention to a number of the points which have been developed and attempts an overall assessment of the dynamics of the process of change in Nicaragua.

Chapter I

The Economic and Political Background to the Anti-dictatorial Movement in Nicaragua

In this chapter an attempt will be made to analyse briefly the context in which Nicaragua's economic and political structure evolved from early in the 19th century up until the overthrow of the Somoza regime.

I will try to highlight some of the relevant factors that have influenced Nicaragua's social and economic development, and the political events which shaped the arena in which later on, a broad popular movement was to take place.

The effects of Spanish Colonial Rule

In this first section I sketch some aspects of the effects which Spanish colonization had on the country's economy and social order. This historical background is important as it represented the framework on which economic and political forces interacted during major events like the country's insertion into the international market.

One important historical antecedent of Nicaragua's present social structure is the specific pattern of resource distribution (e.g. the latifundio-minifundio combination which arose during colonial days). Later a process of decomposition of the peasantry began as agriculture turned progressively towards large-scale export production based upon a small number of agricultural products. This form of agricultural development benefitted a small landed élite.



king to his subjects (encomenderos) who were also allotted forced labour (the Indians), and those communal lands which were given to the Indians as an 'acknowledgement' of their former rights before the Spanish conquest (see Torres Rivas, 1973).

When the separation of the Central American people from Spain was proclaimed in 1821, the existing social groups which had been administering the resources of the Crown found themselves lacking in both experience and adequate institutions to manage alone within the wider commercial sphere. These groups found themselves, as owners of huge areas of idle lands, with an economy based predominantly upon grain cultivation and livestock production, most of which was for internal consumption, since export channels had not been developed. The annexation of the Central American provinces to Mexico shortly after the separation from Spain, and the attempts to form a Central American Federal Republic (which finally failed in 1842) were evidence of their attempts to overcome the chronic backwardness in which the region was left after the prolonged and weak colonial administration. The lack of dynamism in the colonial economic administration had left them without a cohesive economic structure and without any effective social group for confronting the post-colonial situation and developing important productive activities which could broaden the links with the external economy (see Torres Rivas, 1973; Wheelock, 1979; Black, 1981).

Characteristics of the Nicaraguan Economic System in the first half of the 19th century

Prior to the 1821 Declaration of Independence, England had been trying to establish its dominion over the Spanish colonies. After 1821, British firms increased their commercial affairs with the ex-colonies with the purpose of maintaining their leading position in world trade; thus a new impetus was given to the commercial order in the economy of the Central American isthmus. Former exports such as blue indigo, cocoa and cotton were in demand again to supply part of the requirements of the British Industrial Revolution. Although this commercial trade between the Central American region and Britain did not result in a definite and consolidated link for the former into the world's market, it brought new economic expectations. British Sterling, for example, constituted the first financial link between the Central American States and a foreign economy: public loans were given to the ex-colonies and some investments were made in each. By that time, the Central American Federation was hardly functional and, when it was eventually dissolved, debts had to be paid individually and proportionally by each country. Such debts were taken advantage of by the British to further their own interests and constituted a factor which limited internal capitalization (see Torres Rivas, 1973).

During British domination, the Republic's economy pivoted around agricultural production for local consumption and the export of dyes of either vegetable or animal origin. The ending of Spanish domination and the new commercial relationship with the British did not generate significant alterations in the social and economic structures of the Central American

countries because their main forms of livelihood continued to be based upon production for home consumption, i.e. the cultivation of staple crops, livestock, and the export of small-scale agricultural products like leather, tobacco, cocoa, spices, blue indigo and similar.

In Nicaragua, as well as in the neighbouring countries, the predominant economic groups shortly after 1821 were composed of families of Spanish descent born and bred in the country (criollos). These groups were settled around Granada and Leon which since colonial times, had been the main administrative centres. Goods were concentrated there and distributed within and outside the territory. Therefore, the big farmers of Granada and Leon were better placed to develop their agriculture and, apart from producing to satisfy regional subsistence demands, they produced some surplus for external trade (e.g. with Spain and its other colonies and later on England).

There were, as I already indicated, two distinct forms of production within the country's economy. First, production of the señorial type, which consisted of large haciendas acquired during colonial times, characterised by extensive cattle raising. Their labour force was drawn from the nearby peasant population or from the tenant household living within the hacienda (colonos). The haciendas also produced cocoa, sugar cane, cotton, tobacco, vanilla and traded craft goods made by the native population living either inside the hacienda or in villages nearby who brought their craft products to the landlord to sell. The larger haciendas were in the hands of individuals and rich merchants living in the Central, Central-Western, Central-Eastern and Southern parts of the country (e.g. Granada, Leon,

Chontales, Rivas).

The second type was the subsistence production of cereals which was in the hands of small agricultural producers dispersed in the Northern regions of Nicaragua, like Matagalpa, Jinotega, Esteli and Las Segovias. They cultivated maize, beans, some wheat, potatoes, and raised a few cattle and other domestic animals like chickens and pigs; nearly all of their products were for self consumption (see Wheelock, 1979 : 54-58). There was also production of this type along the Pacific Coast, but it differed from the rest because, as a result of the tributarian regulations established during Colonial Rule, the small producers generated a surplus to supply the urban population, while those in the Northern region were cultivating for subsistence. This was linked to the existence of the larger cities on the Pacific Coast and the relative isolation of the northern towns.

By the middle of the 19th century, before Nicaragua became influenced by the coffee boom, its economy was still poorly developed. The country continued to lack a strong internal market which could expand towards other areas of the country and establish a more effective network. Furthermore, though the mercantile activities with Britain had re-animated the production of former agricultural products, this did not lead to significant economic growth. Some productive sectors of Nicaragua became more integrated into a broader system of interchange of goods. The following table illustrates the 'industrial' level and urban occupations which Nicaragua had when coffee cultivation for export began to acquire importance.

Table I : Industries and urban occupations around
the 1860-1870s.

	<u>Characteristics</u>
a) <u>Industries</u>	
Bakeries	Only in Leon and Granada; the rest domestic.
Confectionaries	Very few; generally Indian, honey, fruits of the country.
Cloth	In tailors; a lot with machines; only cloth for men; women's cloth domestically made.
Soap workshops	Very primitive (of animal tallow); no use of coconut or <u>coyol</u> (fruit) oil.
Shoe workshops	Made with Indian leather techniques; some use of imported materials.
Blacksmiths	A lot of small workshops; all iron work.
b) <u>Crafts</u>	
Basketry and precious metals	In the hands of the Indian population. Pottery, cotton textiles, hats, ropes, hammock-making, etc.
Leather	Mainly Indian leather objects, harnesses, etc.
Distillories	Nearly all home made; "clandestine" circulation but could be obtained everywhere. Government had <u>estancos</u> (corner shops) in rundown condition.
c) <u>Other crafts</u>	
Clock menders	Only for repairs. No replacement of parts.
Stonemasons and stone decorators	Constructions of sun-dried bricks, <u>taquezal</u> with little ornamentation
Boatmen, sawmillers, butchers, tanners, (most of them <u>zambos</u> - negros)	
d) <u>Occupations not present</u>	
hat makers, book binders, lithographers, engravers, wood carvers, baconers, architects, civil and mechanical engineers, general technicians.	
Source : Paul Levy in Wheelock, 1979 : 66)	

The broad generalities given above concerning Nicaraguan society illustrate, though in a superficial way, the state of the country at the time of the coffee boom. During the steady move from mercantile production towards agrarian capitalism, a gradual division of labour developed before the main impact of the coffee trade.

The political setting of the 19th century

Before 1821, the country's dominant economic groups became divided into two main regional groups. There were the big cattle ranchers, landlords who cultivated sugar cane and blue indigo, and the large merchants. This group had Granada as its main centre and identified itself politically as Conservative. The other group was those landlords of similar kind though not as big a group as the Conservatives, and some artisans who had their main centre in Leon, and who called themselves Liberals. It is said that the Conservatives clustered around the Chamorro's family of Granada and the Liberals around the Sacasa's family (see Millet, 1979; Wheelock, 1979; Aguilera, 1979 and NACLA, 1978). The political differences seemed to have emerged well before Nicaragua's separation from Spain. The Conservatives were descendants of the colonial military and bureaucratic elites and had the support of the Church hierarchy. The Liberals seem not to have had the same degree of social status and were therefore less influential at a national or regional level (see Black, 1982). Gradually, the Conservatives and Liberals developed somewhat different views with regard to how to stimulate economic growth. For example, the Liberals, it has been argued, maintained a more open position towards free trade, and to improving the country's infrastructure,

while the Conservatives had a narrower and more rigid view regarding investments and broadening their economic activities (see Millet, 1979; Wheelock, 1979; NACLA, 1978). Differences also stemmed from the growing dissatisfaction shown by the Liberals towards the Conservatives, who since colonial times had represented the ruling élite. When their direct role as delegates of the Spanish Crown disappeared, the Liberals used the occasion to try and gain power themselves. As a consequence both factions went into a long struggle, each one fighting to either gain or maintain power.

Shortly before the middle of the 1850's, the Liberals attempted to overthrow the Conservative regime. However as they failed they hired from abroad the filibuster William Walker to defeat the Conservatives. He succeeded but shortly after, turned against the Liberals and proclaimed himself President of the country. However, the two main political parties decided to join forces in a National Liberation War and succeeded in expelling Walker and his troops from the country (see Wheelock and Carrión, 1980 : 17). Such a union between Liberals and Conservatives did not last because once again they competed for power. After Walker's expulsion, the Conservatives managed to remain in power for 36 years.

The geopolitical pretensions of the USA added to Nicaragua's political instability and their various attempts to occupy the country led to armed conflict causing the death of many people.

The Liberal-bourgeoisie Reform

Before the middle of the 19th century, coffee cultivation in the Central American countries became of noticeable importance as a result of its demand in the international market. In Nicaragua the traditional oligarchy saw their economic interests affected by the incipient coffee group, who showed more flexibility with regard to the new perspective in the country's economy. The oligarchy had proved to be incapable of bringing about substantial change in the country and thus most of the population had continued to live essentially in nearly the same conditions as those existing shortly after the 1821 independence.

When eventually the liberal José Santos Zelaya came to power in 1893, he initiated a "modernising policy" at all levels of the country's structure, which ranged from "modernising" the army, to improving the infrastructure, and reforming the legislative system. However, most of the reforms made had the purpose of providing the liberal faction with the necessary means to expand their economic interests in the field of coffee cultivation, which in terms of profits was by then the most favourable agricultural export product in the Central American area, although in comparison to other Central American countries, Nicaragua was late in cultivating coffee on a large scale for export. It did not do so until after the 1850's, owing to the political turmoil of the chronic civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives and because of the continual attempts by foreigners such as the British and the North-Americans to gain rights over the territory because of its suitability as an interoceanic passageway.

The regime headed by the liberal Zelaya had important political and economic consequences for Nicaragua. It restructured the country's agrarian system which consolidated the dualistic latifundia/minifundia pattern, the purpose of which was to back the incipient coffee growing bourgeoisie's interests. That is, adjustments to the State laws were made in order to legalize the dislodging of the peasantry from their land and to support the expropriation of land suitable for coffee growing to the benefit of the Liberal landlords. Secondly, as a consequence, the process of decomposition among the peasantry became accentuated.

Moreover, the Liberal Reform showed a nationalistic position particularly with regard to foreign interference, that later on led to open conflict with the USA and those regimes which had special sympathy to the White House. For instance, Zelaya's attempts to broaden commercial relations with Great Britain and Japan created an increasing discontent among the North Americans, who came to the support of Zelaya's rivals in order to engineer his downfall, which they succeeded in doing in 1909. Nevertheless, the Liberal Reform in Nicaragua as in other Central American countries meant the institutionalization of new patterns of social organization related to coffee production, the internal widening of commercial interests, the bringing in of strong commercial interests from Europe like Germany (see Adams, 1973 : 138) and the improvement of public services (e.g. roads and railways) to facilitate the coffee trade.

From the end of Zelaya's administration onwards, the country's governments were to rely more and more on the USA for both economic and military aid. Presidents like José Estrada,

Adolfo Díaz, Carlos Solórzano and Emiliano Chamorro in order to rule, needed military support. Later on, in 1927 the establishment of a National Guard would prove through time to be an institution which led to the direct interference of the USA in the country's affairs (see Lopez, et al., 1980 : 17). This was to be reinforced, when in 1933 a former car dealer, Anastasio Somoza García, was appointed as its chief director. This man was to be specially singled out by the USA State Department because of his sympathy to the North Americans. He was to count on their prolonged support not only as chief director of the National Guard but also in gaining the presidency in 1936 and ruling by means of a dictatorial regime.

General characteristics of the Nicaraguan social and economic structure

From the end of the 19th century up to the present, the Nicaraguan economy became progressively involved in the export of agricultural products for the international market; first with coffee and later on in the 1950's with cotton cultivation on a large scale. This accentuated the agroexport character of the country's economy, and produced a series of changes in the social and economic organization of the population engaged in their production. This ultimately permitted the establishment of forms of wage labour in the agricultural sector.

The process of accumulation of capital in Nicaragua, as in other Central American countries, has been linked to the process of external accumulation through foreign investment in the main forms of cash-crop production. The low productivity latifundios in the form of large haciendas in Nicaragua concentrated upon

the extensive cultivation of staple crops and cattle raising using tenant and some seasonal peasant labour. Later the development of coffee production led to some reorganization of labour and to the taking over of peasant holdings on the peripheries of the haciendas.

Coffee cultivation for export produced, then, a series of changes in the patterns of economic and social organization of the peasantry. Peasants who had been thrown off their lands, or those whose lands were reduced, had to look for other plots or engage in wage labour to meet their basic consumption needs. Although a part of the peasantry became engaged in wage labour, which could be considered the beginnings of "a process of rural proletarianization", such work was seasonal, due to the agricultural cycle of coffee. In the preparatory period which lasts for most of the year, for instance, only a small number of rural workers are required. This period is popularly known as the 'dead period' (tiempo muerto). While during the harvesting season, large numbers of peasants move from their homes to the coffee plantations and work there for approximately 90 days. It has been calculated that only 10% of the number needed for harvesting were permanent employees (see Wheelock, 1979 : 84). This pattern of production, therefore, reinforced the dualistic agrarian structure of the latifundio-minifundio type.

As long as the demand for coffee was sustained in the international market, it constituted the mainstay of the Nicaraguan economy. However, this made the country dependent on the ups and downs of the international market. When the market was low it affected the foregoing currency situation and this in turn influenced internal investments. Public services were cut,

import prices increased and difficulties arose over the capacity to purchase goods from abroad. This reduced the mobilization of resources within the country, decreasing the level of internal investments. The effects of economic dependency was seen in 1897, 1907 and especially during the 1930 World Recession which had important repercussions on the Central American economies. During the 1930's, the income carried from coffee exports decreased by between 40% and 50% compared with previous years. This caused serious damage to the national economy (see Torres Rivas, 1973 : 155).

It is important to emphasize that though coffee plantations entailed a "new modern modality" in comparison to the agrarian system of colonial days, such modernization did not extend evenly within the countryside. It penetrated mainly in the areas of the large coffee farms while it remained nearly absent in the areas where small producers lived. In other words, coffee cultivation did not undermine subsistence based peasant agriculture; rather it provided a diversified household economy whereby in addition to cultivating small plots, the peasants worked outside in order to supplement their incomes.

The rise in coffee production in the country, especially during Zelaya's administration, gave rise to the emergence of new socio-economic groups concerned with coffee affairs and led to the predominance of the coffee bourgeoisie over the traditional oligarchy that controlled the haciendas.

With the establishment of cotton cultivation in the 1950's, the weak 'capitalist' relationships - that had started to develop with the coffee - became more stressed. Former grain producing areas on the Pacific coast were converted to cotton

cultivation, and the larger farmers began a process of encroachment of peasant holdings. The displaced peasants were forced into selling their labour during peak periods of the agricultural season.

At the end of the 1950's, the country experienced another economic contraction. The price of cotton had decreased and the Nicaraguan economy was badly hit. The impact of the Cuban revolution coincided with the formation of the Central American Common Market - MCCA - which was set within a broader regional plan of development directed mainly at industry. This plan was to be supported with USA financial and technical aid and pursued, on the one hand, in order to expand US economic interests through broadening their market in the Central American region and, on the other hand, in order to develop a strategy to release the political tensions of the region. As there had been a process of capital accumulation in Nicaragua originating from agro-export production (coffee, cotton, sugar cane and meat), the regional development plan represented by the MCCA was aimed at promoting internal investment in order to stimulate economic growth. However, although industry in Nicaragua showed some progress, most of the new enterprises, firms and business houses that appeared in the 1960's were under the control of foreign capital. North American investors opened business branches either by establishing new firms or by absorbing existing smaller enterprises. In Nicaragua especially, Somoza had granted foreign investors a lot of facilities with regard to low taxation, few legal restrictions and the like. This was made all the more easy since Somoza had shares in many of the businesses. Some 63 North American transnationals and 70 subsidiaries, for example, were functioning in Nicaragua,

representing 76% of all enterprises under foreign control (see Castillo Donald, 1979).

Economic dependency also had its political consequences, leading to increased conflict between and among the different social and economic groups. In Nicaragua, shortly before the 1930's international economic depression, the peasant sector, spurred on by the hard living conditions and the high level of unemployment, showed support for the rebellion led by Augusto Cesar Sandino. As we will see later, this struggle aimed not only at arresting North American intervention in the country, but also at agrarian reform. Moreover, it was during the long economic depression that efforts were made to counter the increased social tensions through the imposition of regimes of a dictatorial kind, like those of Jorge Ubico in Guatemala and Anastasio Somoza García in Nicaragua (see Torres Rivas, 1973 and Adams, 1973).

Consolidation of the Dependent Character of the Nicaraguan Economy

During the first half of the 20th century, the Central American countries reinforced their role as suppliers of raw materials. It was also the time in which the USA began to expand its economic interests in Latin America. Nicaragua provided rubber, wood and other products for the Second World War which it had not exploited before, and at the end of the War, Nicaragua had become one of the world's main rubber producers, its export representing 14% of the country's total exports (see Banco Central de Nicaragua, 1975).

The export of raw materials and agricultural products,

like coffee, permitted certain capital accumulation. From the 1950's onwards, Nicaragua experienced a period of economic expansion with regard to the diversification of agro-exports. The penetration of North American capital into Nicaragua increased markedly and the country deepened even more its dependency on the US for economic aid and markets. This tendency had started in the 1930's: by 1938, 25% of Nicaragua's exports went to Western Europe, 15% to Germany and 67% to the USA. By 1944, 6% went to Latin America, just 1% to Europe and other Central American countries, and 91% to the USA (see CEPAL, 1966 : 19).

The "industrial boom" that Nicaragua and the other Central American countries experienced in the 1960's justified by development of the MOCA, was in essence an instrument used by North American investors to locate their capital and expand their economic interests, which, in turn, permitted the relocation of national capital. The process of industrialization in Nicaragua was characterized by the development of light industry producing, for example, food, tobacco, chemical and plastic goods. It was closely linked to the processing of agricultural products, such as vegetable oil, sugarcane, spirits, and meat; led to an increase of imported goods necessary to the processing of commodities which previously had been totally imported.

Industrialization in Nicaragua was accompanied by a closer participation of the State with regard to financial aid. The groups that benefitted most were the multinational and transnational firms that established numerous business branches, and the local economically dominant Somoza family and its associates who were able to take advantage of the improved economic climate

to expand their economic interests.

The Economic Elite in Nicaragua

The tradition in Nicaragua when referring to the dominant groups has been to link them with the first political parties that emerged in the 19th century, the Conservatives and the Liberals. The extent to which the main economic groups have, since their beginnings, been associated with one or the other political party or whether political affiliation has been a fundamental factor in their economic role remains an open question and is not my main concern in this section.

Roughly speaking we can say that there were two distinct local bourgeois groups, that operating as financial, industrialists (usually owning businesses connected with the processing of agricultural products), and that consisting of landlords who had large estates. These were in various ways clustered around the so-called Banamer, Banic or the Somoza groups.

The Banamérica group: originally it is said that this group started to operate representing the historical and economic continuation of the old Conservative oligarchy headed by the known Conservative families, like the Pellas, Chamorro, Bernard, Gomez and others, and who had interests in the commerce, livestock production and sugar cane around Granada (see Wheelock, 1976; Black, 1972). The name of this group derived from the foundation in 1952 of the Banco de América, a bank regarded as being associated with the Conservatives. When this bank commenced operations its main function was to provide aid to existing Conservative entrepreneurs: it had direct ties with US banking institutions, especially with the Wells Fargo Bank and

the First National Bank of Boston (see Strachan, 1979). In the 1960's, the Banamérica group widened their activities to include insurance, construction, real estate and industrial investment, and many enterprises which had been established earlier experienced growth. Well-known firms like SOVIPE (Solorzano, Villa, Pereira)-predominantly engaged in the marketing of electrical appliances and construction materials-, BIRSA (Bienes y Raíces S.A.)-a real estate firm-, and the Inmobiliaria de Ahorro y Préstamo (a loan and savings institution) became economically stronger enterprises once they formed partnerships with the Banco de América.

The Banamérica group increased its economic power and went on to organize financial enterprises like the FIA (Financiera Industrial Agropecuaria) which focused upon supporting industrial, agricultural and livestock operations by developing sugar refineries, meat processing, alcohol and soft drinks industries. FIA also came to assist a large number of subsidiary firms like NIMAC (Nicaraguan Machinery Co.), DIDATSA (a car dealer enterprise), La Prensa (the largest local newspaper), and the Ingenio San Antonio, considered to have the largest rum distillery of the country and one of the largest sugar refineries of the isthmus region, and many other smaller businesses. In brief, the Banamérica group developed a business network in such a way that all its components were linked together and capital circulated amongst them.

The Banic group : was regarded as the counterpart of the Conservatives. This group was formed by non-Conservative families and headed by the well-known Montealegre Callejas, Reyes, Sacasas, and Guerreros families who brought together cotton

farmers, merchants of the western part of the country, and some industrialists from Managua clustered around the Banco Nicaraguense which was established in 1953, stimulated by the cotton boom. From the beginning this group focused on providing economic aid to cotton farmers from Leon and Chinandega and had regional institutions in those Departments. Similar to the Banamérica group, during the 1960's, the Banic group broadened its range of economic activities. The Banco Nicaraguense's partners invested with more emphasis in the industrial sector, in the real estate and in the construction industry. This led to some competition between the Banamérica and Banic groups. Firms like INDESA (Inversiones Nicaraguenses de Desarrollo)- and investment entity centered on industrial development-, FINANSA -a financial institution-, Financiera La Vivienda - a financial firm for house construction-, the insurance firm La Protectora and many others competed for the control of resources and of business.

A feature of the economic activities of the Banic group was that within their enterprises, the members incorporated institutions containing programmes of "social promotion". These programmes aimed to carry out activities for improving the living conditions of different social groups, under the label of development projects. For instance, FUNDE-INDE (Fundación Nicaraguense de Desarrollo) was an institution which introduced programmes to collect contributions, savings and resources in order to help particular groups like some rural communities. However, likely programmes aimed to collect savings from the lower economic groups in order to improve their situation, without questioning the need for deeper changes in order to

improve their living conditions. The "social promotion" strategy was backed by the Alliance for Progress and financed by agencies such as AID, IDF (Agency for International Development and International Development Fund) and other US institutions.

Similar to the Banamérica group, the Banic group had its main financial backing in the USA: the Chase Manhattan Bank, Morgan Guarantee Trust and the Multibank and Trust Co.; and also their enterprises depended upon North American multinationals like the Consolidated Food Corporation, Booth Fisheries, Pepsicola International and others (see Strachan, 1979).

The Somoza group : started to increase its economic assets in the 1930's when Anastasio Somoza García - ASG - became chief director of the National Guard under the North American protectorate and during the regime of Juan Bautista Sacasa. By then, ASG was heir of a small broken-down coffee farm in Carazo and had been a car dealer as well as a gambler. When he became President of Nicaragua in 1936 by means of a coup d'etat, he started to take advantage of his position, especially during and after the Second World War. During the War, ASG established close connections with US entrepreneurs and exchanged favours with members of the North American Government and in this way he managed to enlarge his wealth!: gold, rubber and timber, for instance, were traded with North Americans who, in turn, gave their political support to Somoza while he was establishing profitable businesses (e.g. commercial firms, importer houses for machinery, iron appliances, jewelry). In addition, ASG expelled the German farmers from Nicaragua in order to seize their lands. By 1944, Somoza García was considered to be the

largest landowner of the country. His property included 51 cattle ranches, 46 coffee plantations and a large real estate holding in Managua. At the time of his death in 1956, it was calculated that his agricultural assets had reached 10% of the nation's arable land (see NACLA, 1978).

The Somoza family went on building a wide and selective network which embraced foreigner businessmen, high officers of banks, influential individuals in US politics and in diplomatic levels. The institution which used to finance Somoza's businesses was the National Bank. The family had spread to occupy key offices within the State institutions and therefore had been able to manipulate the available resources in favouring their interests.

Similar to the other groups - BANIC and BANAMERICA - Somoza broadened his economic activities mainly during the 1960 decade following more or less the same pattern of investments as the other groups, but with the advantage that given the large part of the aid oriented to develop the industry - which was provided by North American agencies - was to be canalised through State institutions, Somoza could dispose of it with more facilities than the rest of his competitors.

From the 1972 earthquake, the existing construction firms developed remarkably and the Somoza family also invested heavily in this sector. Moreover, as the Liberals and Conservatives had their respective banks and financial institutions, Somoza managed to organise the Banco de Centroamérica and the financial firm, INTERFINANCIERA as institutions to administer his private enterprises in the country. His properties were, at the same

time, mortgaged in the National Bank as a form of insurance against any threat of expropriation. In the agricultural and industrial fields, the Somozas and their partnerships controlled firms like CARNIC (meat enterprise), the Nicaraguan Cigars (with Batistian Cubans as partners), NICALIT S.A. (a factory of cement and asbestos), and many other enterprises related to sugar, coffee and rice plantations, fish packing, distilleries, cooking oil, textiles and so on (see NACLA, 1976). By 1975, Somoza's businesses in the country were estimated to be worth between US \$ 400 and 500 millions - excluding his outside investments which were protected locally by family members and close friends in the government institutions including the National Guard (see NACLA, 1978 and IEPALA, 1978).

However, in spite of the history of political conflicts between the traditional political groups and later on with Somoza's family, the local bourgeoisie have shown that their conflicts diminish before their economic interests. For instance, during Somoza's administration, Conservatives and Liberals had come into political agreements with the regime for having in return economic allowances like the formation of the Banco de América and the Banco Nicaraguense in the 1950's.

There was some convergence of economic interests between the Banamérica and Banic groups, as shown by the formation of broader associations such as the COSIP (Consejo Superior de la Iniciativa Privada), which served to embrace all individuals with private enterprises and to establish price policies for the local market, indices of fixed salaries for workers, marketing, distribution and agreements to maintain their businesses running with better profit margins (see Strachan, 1979).

The COSIP, in turn, was under the control of the most dominant economic factions of the private entrepreneurs, and their goals could be merged as long as they could carry ahead their economic interests. Although the Liberals and Conservatives on some occasions acted together to put pressure upon Somoza in order to obtain economic and/or political demands, in practice, in the running of their enterprises, links among all these groups existed.

The Popular Movement that Overthrew Somoza Dictatorship

The main purpose of this section is to present a retrospective account, highlighting some of the factors that influenced the formation of the broad movement which eventually brought down the dictatorship that had been established in the early 1930's. It will thus be necessary to give a brief analysis of the significance of Sandino's struggle, the outstanding role of the FSLN in re-interpreting his purposes in relation to the prevailing conditions of Nicaragua in the 1970's, and to describe the events that eventually led to the alliance of a number of different social groups in the effort to bring about major social and economic changes in Nicaragua.

I also intend to examine the events that preceded the fall of the dictatorship. This will familiarise the reader with the national political and economic context and will offer a better understanding of the case study of Esteli which is presented later in the thesis.

Sandino's Struggle

The present-day anti-imperialist and nationalist revolution in Nicaragua has its historical roots in the struggle begun by Augusto Cesar Sandino in the 1920's. His struggle has been an example which has served to enrich the experience of all subsequent liberation movements in Latin America as the Sandino movement pioneered the fight against US intervention in the continent. Earlier we described how Zelaya's regime was defeated in 1909 and replaced by a mixed Government of Liberals and Conservatives approved by the Department of State. It had as President the Liberal Juan José Estrada and as Vice-President the Conservative, Adolfo Díaz. Nonetheless, contrary to what was expected, i.e. that with a mixed Government Liberal-Conservatives conflicts would diminish - the regime did not last and Díaz removed Estrada from power in 1911.

In order to rule, however, Díaz and the Presidents that followed him, were to request stronger military support from the North Americans (who had maintained forces in Nicaragua since the last half of the 19th century in order to protect their geopolitical interests in the country). The North American armed forces were to remain without interruption, with the exception of a short period between 1925-26, up to 1933. After 1933, the National Guard with Anastasio Somoza Garcia as its chief director, was to be responsible for keeping law and order in the country.

But continual armed foreign incursions in the past, the reluctance of the North American army to leave Nicaraguan territory, the chronic Liberal-Conservative conflict and the

overt reliance of the ruling groups on direct US support, were to give rise to revolts among sectors of the population that saw North American interference as one of the main obstacles to solving the country's internal problems. Thus there were revolts, such as the one in October 1912 in Masaya headed by Benjamín Zeledón. This rebellion was put down by the army under Conservative leadership and particularly by the interference of North American troops (see Fonseca Amador, 1980; Millet, 1979; Wheelock, 1979).

Later on, a worker of peasant background who was born in Niquinohomo, a village in the Department of Masaya in 1895, Augusto Cesar Sandino, was to take the leadership of the anti-interventionist struggle against the North Americans. When he began fighting against the marines, he had already worked and acquired political experience in Honduras and Mexico during the 1920's. In Mexico he had worked in the oil fields of Tampico and had become impressed by the nationalism of the Mexican revolution; and it is here that he probably first became interested in socialist ideas (see Macaulay, 1967; Wheelock and Carrión, 1980).

The conflicts between the Conservatives and Liberals generated an armed struggle in 1926, which became known as the Constitutionalist War. Each political group established their own "legitimate" government. The Conservatives were represented by Emiliano Chamorro and Adolfo Díaz, the Liberals by Juan Bautista Sacasa. During the Constitutionalist War, Sandino formed his first permanent forces recruited from workers in a gold mine located in the Northern region of the country. He established his military camp in the area of Guanzapo at the

extreme north of Las Segovias, and, using the dynamite taken from the mines, Sandino began fighting the Conservative army who were from time to time defeated.

Although the Constitutionalist War ended in May 1927 with the Espino Negro Pact between the Liberal José María Moncada and the Conservative Díaz, Sandino remained with his armed group in the mountains of Las Segovias. He considered that the agreements made with the Conservatives, using US officials as mediators, were inadequate since they did not stop North American intervention in Nicaraguan affairs. Thus, Sandino refused to lay down his arms until all the North American troops had left the country. As he had suspected, the marines in fact remained in Nicaragua and therefore reinforced the anti-imperialist struggle. The fight against foreign intervention had an impact not only among the Nicaraguan population but also abroad. For example, in a message sent to all Latin American Presidents in August 1928, Sandino said:

"Do the Latin American governments perhaps think that the yankies will be content with the conquest of Nicaragua? Have these governments perhaps forgotten that of the 21 American republics, six have already lost their sovereignty? Panama, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo and Nicaragua are the six unfortunate republics that have lost their independence and have become colonies of yankie imperialism."

(see Escobar, 1980.)

Sandino's anti-imperialist stand and his internationalist reputation brought him the support of prestigious contemporary figures like the Mexican educator José Vasconcelos, the politician Victor Raul Haya de la Torre and the Chilean poetess, Gabriela Mistral (see Macaulay, 1967). Although Sandino's struggle did not achieve any very great measure of international solidarity, he set an important historical precedent for the encouragement of

movements with similar goals.

Sandino fought the North American troops until they left the country in 1933, having proved incapable of defeating his Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía Nacional de Nicaragua - EDSN - (Army to Defend the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua). The guerrilla tactics used by Sandino proved superior to those of the North American armed forces. The sophisticated weaponry of the North American forces became ineffective against the detailed knowledge of the terrain and peasant support of Sandino's combatants (see Ortega, s/d).

The importance of Sandino's struggle to the recent day revolution in Nicaragua rests on the fact that his example and political thought provided the basis for the development of an ideological platform which could appeal to diverse social and economic groups. In many ways it served as the ideological basis on which organizations like the FSLN were formed in 1961. Sandino's thought was not simply an anti-imperialist stand; it also comprised a detailed programme which revealed a high level of class consciousness which has itself remained valid for the uniting of various social sectors. The Sandinista ideology stressed, for example, the establishment of a popular, democratic and independent government; the collectivization of the land for the benefit of those who worked it; the suppression and re-evaluation of treaties and agreements which were damaging the national sovereignty; integration of continental organizations to protect Latin American interests and reject North American influence; the rescue of the country's natural resources on behalf of the masses; the encouragement of respect for national values and the maintenance of the EDSN (Army to Defend the

National Sovereignty of Nicaragua) (see Escobar, 1980).

Thus, although Sandino, who was assassinated in 1934 in a plot involving Somoza García, was unable to achieve all of his goals, he left a legacy which was to prove an example for the anti-imperialist struggle and a political tradition emphasizing collective political consciousness among the masses and other social strata committed to the struggle.

The Revival of Sandino's Thought

Once Sandino had died, Somoza García managed to oust Juan Bautista Sacasa from power and thus became President in 1936 by means of rigged elections. Though his period of office was to end four years later, he modified the Constitution in order to stay in power; in fact he remained in power until a young revolutionary poet Rigoberto López Perez assassinated him in 1956. By then, the Somoza family had amassed immense power by enlarging its wealth and retaining the control of the National Guard, the most powerful armed institution in the country. It is worth pointing out that the sons of Anastasio Somoza García, Luis and Anastasio junior, had already been trained to continue control of the State apparatus with the support of the US Department of State. They had built a network of supporters in the North American political sphere which through economic returns had been able to maintain the flow of Washington aid towards Somoza's regime. Thus, after Somoza García's death, the family had the internal and external mechanisms both for expanding their economic empire and reinforcing their political power with the total assistance of the US government. Somoza's fortune had started to grow from the seizure of land and capital resources in the 1930's, accumulating more capital with the profitable

businesses the first Somoza had established during the Second World War in response to the outside demand for raw materials for war industries and they continued increasing their wealth with the diversification of their economic interests during the 1960's onwards. Their economic empire was sustained and extended by the use of State institutions.

The contradictions of the political system Somoza García had set up, the effects that the cotton slump had on the population in the 1950's and the impact of the Cuban revolutionary movement among organisations aiming at major social change created conditions in Nicaragua to stimulate popular mobilization in protest against their deteriorating living conditions. The Socialist Party (Communist) which had been founded in the 1940's had been making efforts to organize the incipient labour movement that had been promoted by the cotton boom and the economic diversification that followed. However, as the Socialist Party had not been able to set out a programme which could unite satisfactorily the economic, social and political aspirations of many of its members, some university students who had begun to read Sandino's writings started to explore the possibilities of rescuing his ideas and putting them into practice.

Thus, in 1951 the former university students, Carlos Fonseca Amador, Silvio Mayorga and Tomás Borge took the decision to create a new organization adapting the basic ideas of Sandino's struggle to meet the needs of the contemporary situation of the country. The success of Fidel Castro's overthrow of the Batista Dictatorship using guerrilla tactics also seemed to reaffirm Sandino's conception of the necessity for armed struggle. So, for the first time after Sandino's death, the seeds were there

to develop an organization which contemplated armed struggle as well as political tasks. So as to defeat the enemy, Carlos Fonseca suggested that the new movement should be called the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional).

Small groups directed their political activities towards organising students' cells who worked to get in touch with peasants who had fought with Sandino in the northern regions of Nicaragua, aiming to form a human and material base to shape their organization. The first ideological steps were focused on combining and fusing Marxist theory with the Sandinista experience. At the same time, efforts were made to recruit workers, peasants, students, artisans and elements of the lower economic sectors to open new diverse fronts of political action and activity, although the initial work of organization was very slow. As in Sandino's time, the northern regions of Nicaragua were the main areas where the FSLN members were able to establish their first cells. These included peasants, seasonal rural workers and artisans from the Departments of Matagalpa, Esteli, Somoto and Ocotal. The areas along the frontier with Honduras became the first training places for the future guerrilla fighters.

By 1963, the FSLN had already formed their first guerrilla column and had had their first armed clash with the National Guard in the Northeastern part of the country. Throughout the 1960's, the FSLN worked hard to develop their political and military infrastructure among different socio-economic groups. This process was slow because of the clandestine character of the work, political repression, and because of the difficulties of gaining the trust of the peasantry. As a result, many of the members of the guerrilla army were from the cities and of middle-

class origins. However, the FSLN gradually managed to build a base, although it was not until 1967 that it was able to spread more widely the notion of their struggle as an organization with a future and a programme. The FSLN had been able to organize a regular guerrilla army. This meant that its members had been capable of strengthening their support networks in the countryside as well as in the urban centres, such as Managua, León, Matagalpa, Esteli and others. Somoza responded by sending the National Guard to the area where the FSLN had established their guerrilla camps, and many FSLN main leaders died in battle. Guerrilla actions in 1967 were to be remembered as the heroic epic of Pancasán (in the Department of Matagalpa) which, though it was a military defeat, politically had the effect on the population in terms of bringing to their attention a new alternative for fighting the dictatorship, searching for structural changes as well as raising national consciousness about the brutality of the regime (see Ortega, H., 1980).

After Pancasán, the FSLN entered into a period of retrenchment. Internally the leadership went on discussing and establishing priorities in order to carry on to re-build their structures, since, with the defeat of Pancasán their base had almost disappeared. In their self-criticism about the work they had carried out in the past, FSLN members realised that many mistakes had been made with regard to methods of work, quality of elements recruited, individualism, the low level of political education, and their isolation from the masses; the urban cells the FSLN had formed had been organised mainly so as to provide support for the guerrillas in the mountains and the organization had tended to neglect political activity among

workers in cities. In consequence, two avenues were devised to link the organisation with the masses. Those who were inclined to abandon the armed struggle now concentrated on organizational tasks, while others, although recognizing the necessity of developing organization among students and in the slums, preferred to concentrate on reactivating armed struggle, since many of the cadres who actually had military training had been killed at Pancasán. Thus, many FSLN members devoted a lot of time to recruiting supporters from the working population (many members of the Socialist Party moved to the FSLN), dwellers, students, and among the peasantry, trying to raise their political education and training them for agitational activities (see Ruiz, H., 1980).

After the 1972 earthquake, there occurred an expansion of economic activities in the construction field which, in turn, offered possibilities for the working population in the city to press their economic demands. During 1973 and 1974 different sectors organized strikes (e.g. the construction workers, the health workers and some industrial centres) and the mobilization created by these permitted the strengthening of organizations like the FSLN. On the other hand, the Somoza regime had become progressively isolated from the local bourgeoisie. By taking charge of the Emergency Earthquake Relief Committee, Somoza managed to neutralize the Triumvirate (which was supposed to rule until 1974) and to channel much international aid into the pockets of his own family and friends. This created increasing discontent among those bourgeois groups which did not benefit from such favours.

In December 1974, the FSLN carried out a major military action after several years of relative quiet, the seizure of the house of a well-known somocista, José María Castillo Quant, who was Minister of Agriculture and was hosting a reception for the US Ambassador Turner Shelton. The FSLN demanded the liberation of sandinista prisoners, a ransom, the publication of a press and radio communiqué to the people of Nicaragua denouncing the regime, and an increase in wages. The success of this action made the FSLN more widely known among the population and to the outside world. Nevertheless, shortly afterwards, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, who had "won" the Presidential election in the same month, imposed a state of emergency which was to last for 33 months. This included a curfew, press censorship and social powers of arbitrary arrest. He also set up a special military tribunal to investigate the FSLN. All these measures nationally had their effect in the FSLN. Somoza directed the National Guard to terrorise the population in the country areas where the FSLN had established their bases. Also, as a result of the state of emergency, the urban network which had provided aid to the guerrillas became less strongly linked to the countryside.

The split and the unity of the FSLN

When the anti-dictatorial movement was at its peak, during the urban uprisings of 1978, the FSLN was divided into three factions. This had resulted from internal differences that had gradually evolved during the early 1970's. We have already pointed out that at the end of the 1960's the FSLN leadership re-analysed its strategies, having suffered serious military set-backs. It was important to build a stronger and more consolidated base, which could sustain a protracted struggle em-

bracing not only guerrilla warfare but also the incorporation of larger sectors of the population working along different political fronts. FSLN leaders also re-thought the wisdom of concentrating their efforts on the rural guerrilla force, taking into account other comparable experiences, such as Che Guevara's force in Bolivia, and guerrilla movement in Guatemala.

Some of the FSLN cadres placed more emphasis on urban work, thus postponing the armed struggle to a later stage, while others stressed the necessity of embracing both areas of work (countryside and city) but argued that the guerrilla work in the mountains was a bigger priority. Also the influence of orthodox Marxist ideology, which views the proletariat as the leading force in the socialist revolution, caused some FSLN members to point to their lack of political work among the incipient working class of Nicaragua. These internal differences and controversies grew and became sharper with the increased repression launched during the state of emergency resulting in open rifts in 1975. Those who believed in the armed struggle based their commitments on the strategy of the Protracted Popular War (Guerra Popular Prolongada) - GPP; whilst those who argued for the need to prepare the working class for the revolution concentrated on political and organizational aspects among the working sectors of the city. The latter tendency was known as the Proletarian Tendency -TP (see Lopez, et al., 1980; Black, 1981; Ortega, 1980; Ruiz, 1980).

In 1976, Carlos Fonseca, who had been the founder of the FSLN and who was at the time in Cuba, returned to Nicaragua to try to sort out the internal rifts. However, he was killed

before achieving his objective. Meanwhile, FSLN members who were in exile reacted against both the GPP and TP, pointing out that they were both ultimately following a strategy of "protracted accumulation of forces", although the emphasis was a little different.

The third faction, which was known as the Terceristas or Insurreccionales, argued that, given the political conjuncture of increasing discontent among the 'popular' sectors, local bourgeoisie and middle economic strata towards the dictatorship, there was advantage in adopting a broad flexible approach leading eventually to a broadly-based popular uprising. The Terceristas were, then, in favour of exercising a military offensive together with forming broad political alliances with diverse social and economic groups, thus taking advantage of inter-bourgeois conflicts, discontentment of the 'popular' sectors and the growing anti-somocista attitude of the general population (see Weber, H., 1981).

As long as Somoza was still in power, the export economy heavily affected by the fall in the price of commodities such as coffee, cotton and sugar cane and foreign investment decreasing, the local bourgeoisie increased internal conflicts and the dictatorship became progressively more isolated from the rest of the population. These conditions favoured the formation of a broadly-based anti-Somoza movement. Thus, the convergence of the factions into a single front allowed the FSLN to lead the movement, since it was the only organization capable of facing up to the National Guard. The various tasks which each of the factions had carried out - in the mountains, among students and workers, in the slums, among religious groups, with women, and

so forth, - came to coincide and complemented each other. The capacity of the FSLN leadership in canalising other existing organizational action so as to create a mass base, and the ability to respond boldly to the manoeuvres of the enemy, brought popular support to the FSLN that accorded it the central role in the movement.

The Fall of the Somoza Dictatorship

When the state of emergency was imposed in December 1974, groups of the local bourgeoisie and middle classes associated with both the Liberal and Conservative parties had suffered a political set back. Anastasio Somoza Debayle - ASD - had "won" the presidential elections. With these fraudulent elections he had expressed once more his wish to continue in power (as ipso facto he had done at his brother's death in 1967) and that he had no intention to let other groups come to power. From the beginning of the 1970's, the main electoral parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, had split into several new parties. Besides the Liberal Nationalist Party - PLN - (which was Somoza's party) and the Conservative Party - PC(O) - (Official Conservative Party created by Somoza to give the appearance of having support from the conservatives) on the one hand, and the already existing Independent Liberal Party - PLI - on the other, dissidents from the old Liberal and Conservative parties had formed the Constitutionalist Liberal Movement - MLC -, the Authentic Conservative Party - PCA -, the Aguerista Conservative Party, and the National Conservative Action - ANC. This dispersal of political forces opposed to Somoza had negative consequences since it prevented them from challenging collectively Somoza's monopolization of power.

In 1973, an attempt to form a stronger front against Somoza had been made with the formation of the Democratic Liberation Union - UDEL. This comprised the existing opposition political groups, including the Socialist Party. Formally UDEL's members were to work to a programme aimed at achieving free elections, freedom of expression, and which included proposals for economic development, recognising workers' rights to organize themselves, as well as the right of equal opportunities for all businessmen. However, the prevailing contradictions among the members of these organizations tended to neutralise the conditions for developing an effective political alternative capable of counteracting Somoza's power, at least in the short run.

The emergence of UDEL was related to the need that some bourgeois elements, like the Conservative Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, face up to the ways in which Somoza's corruption had affected bourgeois economic and political interests. P.J. Chamorro was UDEL's general secretary. He controlled the largest newspapers in the country and had pretensions to challenge Somoza by participating as Presidential candidate in the 1981 elections. He was keen to make UDEL a strong opposition front which would back him in future elections.

The Consequences of the State of Emergency

At the beginning of the state of emergency, Somoza's rival groups made no major protest. They disliked the FSLN's radical way of fighting the regime and did not concern themselves whether or not the sandinistas were persecuted. However, as the state of emergency continued, political censure and martial law acted as obstacles to carrying out group activities (i.e. mobilization

and propaganda) in order to develop an opposition front, such as UDEL. On the other hand, the repression of the peasantry and other groups of the population which were considered to be helping the sandinistas had reached such a level that the need to organize increased. Their restlessless converged with the interests of the middle class in general as they had also become affected. As a consequence, diverse social groups began to organize their protests together, demanding the lifting of the state of emergency. Progressive religious elements also had become involved through their own pastoral practice, and though participating in activities such as the courses for Christian living (cursillos de vida cristiana) which promoted serious discussion of the country's social, political and economic problems. Accordingly, many different social groups became interested in joint action so as to acquire further commitment in order to change the social order.

Outside the country political refugees in places such as Mexico and Costa Rica had been attempting to increase international solidarity towards the people of Nicaragua, denouncing the dictatorial regime. Thus, by 1977 the campaign against the state of emergency grew significantly. Churches were taken over by students and by radio and press reporters. Numerous marches took place in the main cities, communiqués emanating from political parties, private institutions and various work organizations had been published and sectors which previously had not faced the dictatorship's abuses overtly made declarations requesting the end of violence. Among the latter was the hierarchy of the Church which, through its Episcopal Conference, sent a message to their militants denouncing the conditions of

terror and making a commitment to the freedom to choose a better and fairer regime (see Mensaje de la Conferencia Episcopal, 1977).

The dictatorship tried to counteract this generalised protest by exercising more repression through its armed institutions and, foreseeing deeper threats, the North Americans asked for financial credit for military aid. Nevertheless, the movement demanding the lifting of the state of emergency had gone too far and the contradictions between Somoza and his bourgeois opponents, who on several occasions had made some agreements, were sharp enough to stop their campaign.

In September 1977 the state of emergency, martial law and censorship was withdrawn. At the same time the leadership of the protest movement had decided that the political superstructure was vicious and that to attempt to pursue changes by electoral means would not actually bring about the changes that the country urgently needed. Hence, on the 12th and 13th of October 1977, the Frente (Tercerista) attacked the garrisons of the National Guard in San Carlos (a port in the south of the country and the Lake of Nicaragua) and of Ocotal (in the north of the territory) declaring that these actions marked the beginning of armed confrontation on a larger scale. The state of emergency had constituted a political conjuncture which combined with the existing economic crisis to generate the conditions under which the various social groups joined together in an anti-dictatorial movement.

The Anti-Somocista Movement and the First Uprisings

The agitation originating from the campaign to lift the state of emergency and the effects produced by the killing, capture and disappearance of individuals of various social backgrounds, also stimulated further initiatives among the population to accelerate the possibilities of political change. For example, on the 16th of October, a document signed by a group of well-known citizens was published. They were to be known as the group of Los Doce (The Twelve) and embraced progressive university professors, some nationalist businessmen, a banker, and some progressive priests. In their document they asserted the need for substantial changes to achieve a real democratic order and recognised the just struggle the FSLN had carried out as well as its right to participate in any process of change (see La Prensa, 21.10.1977). This declaration was made as a result of the call to a "National Dialogue" by the opposition bourgeoisie which set out the need for social, economic and political reform and the participation of all the organized groupings, but did not mention the FSLN. By this time, the Frente had gained broad support from the masses, which made its omission appear somewhat odd.

The FSLN welcomed the statement by Los Doce. This was the first time that a group of diverse composition had recognised their struggle, and they now declared their desire to participate in the "National Dialogue". Nevertheless, the Frente considered that for any real solution, the regime of Somoza and his followers would have to be eliminated. Moreover, the Frente called on the whole country to support the struggle to end the dictatorship, and stated that they would back any attempt to

seek a national solution. Their appeal also contained some basic points, including the nationalization of all properties and interests of the Somoza family, guarantees concerning the exercise of democratic freedom, freedom of organization for all parties and citizens, freedom for local and trade union organizations, and the end to all forms of repression (see Gaceta Sandinista, 1977-1978).

By the end of 1977 the status of the organizations involved in the anti-somocista movement was already clear. On the one hand, it consisted of the opposition bourgeoisie, represented mainly by UDEL and the Church hierarchy, represented by Monsignor Obando y Bravo and on the other, radicalised middle class groups represented by Los Doce and worker and local groups represented by FSLN, including priests identified with major public concerns. The dictatorship was thus politically isolated. Of the existing organizations in the country the only group supporting the regime was the PLN (Somoza's party). Even the official Conservative Party (also called Zancudo) had developed serious conflicts with Somoza when it agreed to the call for a "National Dialogue"; the somocistas took the view that a dialogue was alright but first the FSLN should lay down its arms.

From the lifting of the state of emergency, the marches and propaganda activities among the organized sectors of the population increased even more. These factors also overlapped with other important events, such as a number of cases of desertion by National Guard's men (LP, 4.1.78) and the mobilization in several work centres demanding the fulfilment of collective labour agreements. Since December 1977 workers in the health sector, the textile industry, construction and in Somoza's enter-

prises had increased their protests against the violation of their rights and were ready to go on strike (see LP, 22-27.12.77).

The continuing agitation and mobilization of the population also coincided with increasing armed clashes between the FSLN and the National Guard, and the taking over of villages and towns throughout the territory. These actions were part of the strategy of the FSLN (tercerista) which its leadership, aware of the guerrillas' exhaustion as a result of the repression suffered over the previous months, had decided to launch a military offensive. The leadership decided that in order to surmount the military weakness of the guerrillas - who had also remained somewhat isolated in the mountains - it was necessary to organize other activities that could establish closer links between them and the local population which could be of considerable value for any action in the future.

A degree of re-grouping among left-wing organizations took place at the beginning of 1978. The Communist Party of Nicaragua - PC de N. -, the CGT (i) a workers' confederation dominated by the Socialist Party and the Socialist Party itself, denounced the manoeuvres of the opposition bourgeoisie, which had begun to indicate that a National Dialogue was possible with Somoza. The Socialist Party had withdrawn from UDEL, realising that the latter's leadership intended to make some agreement with the Somoza regime which would be antagonistic to the interests of the Socialist Party. The National Dialogue had been posed as an alternative by the domestic opposition bourgeoisie, so as to gain political hegemony within the anti-dictatorial movement and to counteract the FSLN's increasing its support from the masses. The non-somocista bourgeoisie also tried to convince

the USA that they were the best political alternative in contradistinction to the left groups.

The total failure of the National Dialogue to solve the political situation under peaceful terms was dramatically underlined with the assassination of UDEL's general secretary, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, on the 10th of January 1978. His family accused the regime and UDEL, together with the Authentic Conservative Party - PCA - and retreated from the Dialogue. The opposition front, led by the bourgeoisie, now turned more radically towards Somoza, and made a call for joint action in order to eradicate the dictatorship (LP, 13-20.1.78).

As a consequence, the situation of conflict in the country became sharper. Political parties, trade unions, press associations, national and private universities, the Association of Clergy, students' organizations (e.g. the FER), the organized women's groups all condemned the assassination. As was expected, private enterprise organizations such as the Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Construction, the Higher Council of Private Enterprise - COSEP - and others, protested and planned to carry out a national strike on the 22nd of January.

The opposition bourgeoisie clearly hoped to force Somoza's resignation through the businessmen's strike. However, Somoza did not in fact go, and as a prolonged paralysis of industry and commerce would inevitably have affected their economic interests, the action was stopped. Thus, by the end of February most shops and businesses had started to function once more. Although the strike had certainly brought the economic life of the country to a standstill, it had not been strong enough to defeat the regime,

and Somoza countered with even stronger repression.

The strike, organized by the opposition bourgeoisie, might have been thought likely to bring them wider support from the 'popular' sectors. However, the left represented mainly by the Frente, had already been able to accumulate such grassroots support. Through its base organizations in the barrios, working centres and among students, the sandinista cadres undertook intensive political activity in order to canalise and utilise the mood of restlessness among the masses. At the same time, the FSLN's armed actions in urban centres like Granada, Rivas and in the Department of Nueva Segovia (in the South and North respectively), also contributed to gain people's sympathy.

The broad mobilization of groups denouncing the regime and demanding social and economic rights, the assassination of the most outstanding leader of the opposition bourgeoisie, the armed actions of the FSLN in different parts of the country and the repression organized by the National Guard in various towns and cities, especially those which showed a particularly strong rejection of the regime, were to set in motion a series of initiatives among different social groups, which were not generally the responsibility of any particular political organization. This was the case with the Monimbo's uprising.

Soon after the end of the businessmen's strike, around the 20th February, Monimbó, which is a barrio of Masaya (a town very close to Managua) began a rebellion. Its inhabitants, (about 20,000), mostly Indians, protested against the killings and abuse of the Guard towards them and spontaneously went into armed revolt. The FSLN had not planned it and when the masses

suddenly started to fight, the Sandinistas in the town had nothing else to do but to try to canalise it. This was the first mass uprising in the country and after a week or so, the Guard, employing harsh repressive methods, was able to get the town under its control once more. However, the Monimbó uprising offered clear evidence of the potential mass mobilization. The FSLN could now envisage the course of the movement more clearly, and besides intensifying their political tasks went on preparing the grounds for future actions.

Between February and August 1978, the anti-somocista movement increased its numbers very considerably. In each town, city and village in the countryside, local groups kept working in order to incorporate more groups and individuals. Meanwhile, the opposition bourgeoisie continued to display various strategies in order to achieve the support of the US Department of State, believing this to be the best way of overthrowing the regime. It was obvious that the North Americans still passed military and economic aid to Somoza to assist him in solving internal problems. As UDEL had practically disintegrated at the death of its leader, other organizations emerged attempting to replace it; for example, the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement - MDN - formed by the industrialist and cotton grower, Alfonso Robelo. He was later to be one of the members of the first Junta after Somoza's defeat. Robelo attempted to re-group the anti-somocistas, forming the Broad Opposition Front - FAO - in May 1978. This gave the opportunity for the FAO leaders to maintain contact with the FSLN through the group of Los Doce.

Hence, the FSLN and other revolutionary organisations now embodied the largest anti-somocista group. Around July, the

United People's Movement - MPU - came into the open. Some of its member organizations were: the General Confederation of Labour - CGT (i) -, the Rural Workers' Association - ATC -, the Revolutionary Students' Front - FER -, the Secondary Students' Movement - MES -, the Association of Women Confronting the National Problem - AMPRONAC -, the Socialist Party - PSII -, the Communist Party of Nicaragua - PC de N.-, Los Doce, the Independent Liberal Party - PLI - and many others (see Lopez, et. al., 1980).

During 1978 a period of popular agitation and mass political mobilization began which eventually burst into a general uprising in the main cities of the country. On August 22nd the FSLN (tercerista) successfully took over the National Palace, capturing 1500 hostages, including the Minister of the Interior and a cousin of Somoza Debayle. The latter was then forced to release 59 political prisoners, pay a ransom for the hostages, broadcast a communiqué and give guarantees that the released prisoners would be allowed to leave the country (see LAB, 1979).

This FSLN operation was shortly followed by another call for a general strike on behalf of the opposition bourgeoisie organised by the FAO. This appears to have been a tactic used by the non-somocista entrepreneurs to obtain mass support. Then, as in the spontaneous uprising at Monimbó, the northern city of Matagalpa built barricades and rebelled towards the end of August. This was followed by a chain of insurrections in the cities of León, Masaya, Chinandega, and Esteli, and other armed clashes occurred in smaller towns through the country.

Thus, during the first two weeks of September 1978 the country experienced an intense period of political and military

activity. On the 11th September martial law was declared in nearly all the cities where insurrections had taken place and their populations were submitted to heavy bombing by air, tank bombardment and machine gunfire. In places like Esteli, "cleaning" operations were started with the participation of outside soldiers from the Central American Defense Council - CONDECA. By the third week of September the National Guard had re-established control over the main urban centres.

Although the FSLN leadership had envisaged insurrection as a tactical means of defeating the regime and its cadres took a leading part in the uprisings, it became aware of the need to strengthen the military training of its forces and to consolidate its grassroots infrastructure. Militarily, the FSLN had not won; they had retreated from the cities under heavy attack from the National Guard. However, valuable experience was gained from these encounters with the National Guard. Moreover the FSLN realised that the people of the cities had given support to its combatants (see Ortega, 1980).

By the end of 1978, the FAO had lost the opportunity of leading the anti-somocista movement and of reaching a peaceful solution with Somoza. In October a mediatory Commission had been established by the Organization of American States - OAS -, consisting of representatives from the USA, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. The Commission had agreed with the FAO - with the approval of the Carter administration - to negotiate with Somoza in order to persuade him to resign and leave the country. In return, Somoza would be able to keep his properties. It was also proposed that the National Guard should continue and a pluralist government be installed instead. However, Somoza rejected

these proposals (see Gilly, 1980; Black, 1981).

The Final Sandinista Offensive

With the formation of the National Patriotic Front - FPN, on 1st February 1979, concrete steps were taken for the replacement of dictatorship. The FSN was a coalition of political parties, trade unions and organizations representing different social groupings. It included all the organizations embraced by MPU, Los Doce, PLI, the Popular Social Christian Party - PPSC -, the Workers' Front - FO -, the Nicaraguan Confederation of Workers - CTN - (controlled by the Social Christians) and the Radio and Press Union. These were to work out a minimum programme based upon three fundamental principles: national sovereignty, effective democracy, and justice and social progress. However, one central condition for developing these three principles was the overthrow of Somoza (see Lopez, et al, 1980).

The country's economic crisis reached its peak in April 1979 when a devaluation of the national currency by 43% was announced (ibid). In the following months all economic sectors, especially the small and middle entrepreneurs (merchants and producers) were affected; moreover, the living conditions of the lower income groups were deteriorating rapidly.

The three factions of the FSLN had by now managed to achieve some unity and were planning their last military and political offensive. Their cadres dispersed among grassroots organizations such as the Civil Defence Committees - CDC's - the Revolutionary Workers' Committees - COR's -, the students associations such as the FER, FES, women's groups in AMPRONAC, the Rural Workers'

Association - ATC, and others, to prepare for the coming fight. By April the FSLN had planned to carry out a campaign of harrassment in several parts of the country. However, in Esteli the population rose up in arms in support of the local FSLN and in consequence, accelerated the insurrectional offensive at a national level. After Esteli, other confrontations followed and, in order to prevent a lack of coordination between different local groups the FSLN called a general offensive at the end of May, which was to be initiated by a general strike on 4th June. Fighting started in the main cities: Chinandega, Leon, Matagalpa and Esteli, and spread to Masaya, Granada, Carazo and the main working class quarters of Managua. Hence by the second week of June the whole country was at war (Ortega, 1980; Lopez et al., 1980).

During the months prior to the final offensive, the US Department of State unsuccessfully applied pressure on Somoza to withdraw from power. Then in June when the country was in complete rebellion, Washington proposed to the Organization of American States - OAS - the formation of a "Peacekeeping Force" to intervene in Nicaragua. However, Panama, Mexico and the countries of the Andean Pact categorically rejected the use of any outside force to solve Nicaragua's internal problems. The Andean Pact countries called for the immediate resignation of Somoza and for the support of the new Junta which some days before had been formed on the initiative of FSLN. It was a surprise to many that the Andean Pact (Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia) resolution was approved by 17 votes to 2 (Nicaragua and Paraguay) and there were 5 abstentions from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Uruguay and Chile (see Black,

1981). The spokesman for the resolution was to be the new US Ambassador to Nicaragua, Lawrence Pezullo, who arrived to take up office at the end of June. Once again, Somoza refused to negotiate and insisted on remaining in power.

The new Junta was made up of one of the leading members of the FSLN, Daniel Ortega; a leader of the MPU, Moises Hassan, a member of Los Doce, Sergio Ramirez; the industrialist leader of the MDN, Alfonso Robelo, and the widow of the former UDEL's general secretary, Violeta Barrios Chamorro.

On the international level, Somoza's regime was now almost completely isolated. Mexico and Costa Rica, for example, had broken diplomatic relations with Nicaragua in May; the countries of the Andean Pact had condemned the dictatorship and the FSLN had received support from a number of European social democratic countries (e.g. Holland, Sweden and West Germany), Panama, Cuba, Costa Rica and others (see Gilly, 1980; LAB., 1979; Possamay, 1980). By the end of June, the National Guard was no longer capable of controlling any part of the country, and the fall of the regime seemed inevitable. The FSLN's military Central Front (which embraced the armed forces of Granada, Masaya and Managua) had decided to withdraw tactically in order to re-group its forces in Masaya and launch them with much more strength towards the capital city. Somoza's main fort still remained untaken, (see Barreto, 1981) but eventually on 17th July Somoza decided to abandon the country and placed one of his relatives (by marriage), Francisco Urcuyo, in the Presidency. Presumably, he hoped to continue "negotiating for power". However, by the next day, Urcuyo had also left Nicaragua (see Urcuyo, 1979) and on the 19th the FSLN forces took control of Somoza's mili-

tary fort ("bunker") and assembled a huge crowd in the central square, from where Daniel Ortega, the President of the new Government Junta for National Reconstruction - JGRN - announced the expropriation of all the property of Somoza and his group and the organization of a new national army. A few days later, the new Junta and the FSLN moved towards a re-organization of the State apparatus and delineated the first tasks to be carried out to achieve national reconstruction.

The movement that overthrew Somoza's dictatorship was characterized by a broad participation of groups from nearly all social and economic sectors of the country. It made use of a varied set of strategies in order to achieve popular support. The movement against Somoza was also an expression of a class struggle that varied according to the stage of its development, and depended upon the subjective understandings of the individuals, and groups involved in analysing and responding to the particular situations they faced. The state of emergency, for instance, generated a more explicit questioning of the social order. The movement also responded to the large US involvement in the country's political affairs and more specifically its links with the dictatorship.

This chapter has attempted to describe the historical, political and social context within which the Sandinista movement and the liberation struggle emerged.

The next chapters form a case study of these developments in a specific locality, the town of Esteli.

CHAPTER II

The Economic and Political Setting of Esteli

Introduction

Part II covers the analysis of data collected in 1980 during fieldwork in the city of Esteli. It aims to present information on social groups in Esteli, the patterns of social and economic development, and an account of local participation during and after the Liberation struggle. The analysis is largely based upon subjective interpretations provided by various individuals who took part in the events. As I explained in the Introduction, the case study has as its primary objective the elucidation of actors' perceptions of political experience and of how this experience has shaped their understandings of the present situation and the tasks before them. Where possible, the discussion is complemented by more general data on changes in the local economy and on the social reconstruction process.

The present chapter focuses on the economic background and defines the major social groups in Esteli in the events preceding the 1978 uprising. It also uses case material to document the political roles played by individuals from different social groups. The following chapter describes the process of political mobilization during the insurrectional period (1978-1979), drawing upon individuals' accounts of their participation and the sequence of events. Chapter IV offers an analysis of the post-liberation period, concentrating upon the problems of re-channelling political participation

in order to consolidate the organizational structures at local levels, with the aim of sustaining the new social order and of promoting direct participation in the new national development tasks.

It is important at the outset to recognise, as I have argued in Part I, that Esteli's struggle for liberation cannot be explained as an isolated phenomenon but must be treated within the wider national and international contexts. Another significant point is that the liberation struggle constituted a process of extremely fast change which had a profound effect on political consciousness, to the extent that the grassroots organizations established then have come to play a central role in the political and productive life of the country.

1. General Background

a. Geographical location

Nicaragua's territorial surface is 130,000 Square Kms. The population in 1977 was 2,325,000 inhabitants, distributed among 16 administrative units (departamentos). Each department has its own municipios (municipalities) and its own departmental capital which constitutes the largest urban centre. (See Datos básicos sobre Nicaragua, 1980 : 7).

The Department of Esteli is located in the Northeastern region of the country. It has five municipios: Esteli, Condega, Pueblo Nuevo, San Juan de Limay and La Trinidad; its departmental capital is located in the municipio of the same name, Esteli. The Department's limits are: to the North, the Department of Madriz; to the East, Jinotega; to the South by Matagalpa and Leon; and to the West, Leon, Chinandega and

Madriz (see Maps I and II).

The city of Esteli is 150 Kms. to the north of the country's capital, Managua, being located on the Panamerican road which goes to Honduras. The city is sited in the river valley of Esteli. Its natural limits are: to the West and East, a series of plateaux (mesas) which run parallel until they reach the ravines (garganta) of the municipio of La Trinidad, towards the south; to the North, low hills; and to the South a mountainous belt. The nearest plateaux to the city reach a height of between approximately 1200 to 1400 metres above sea level, with Esteli located at 830 metres (MINVAH, Entrevistas, 1980).

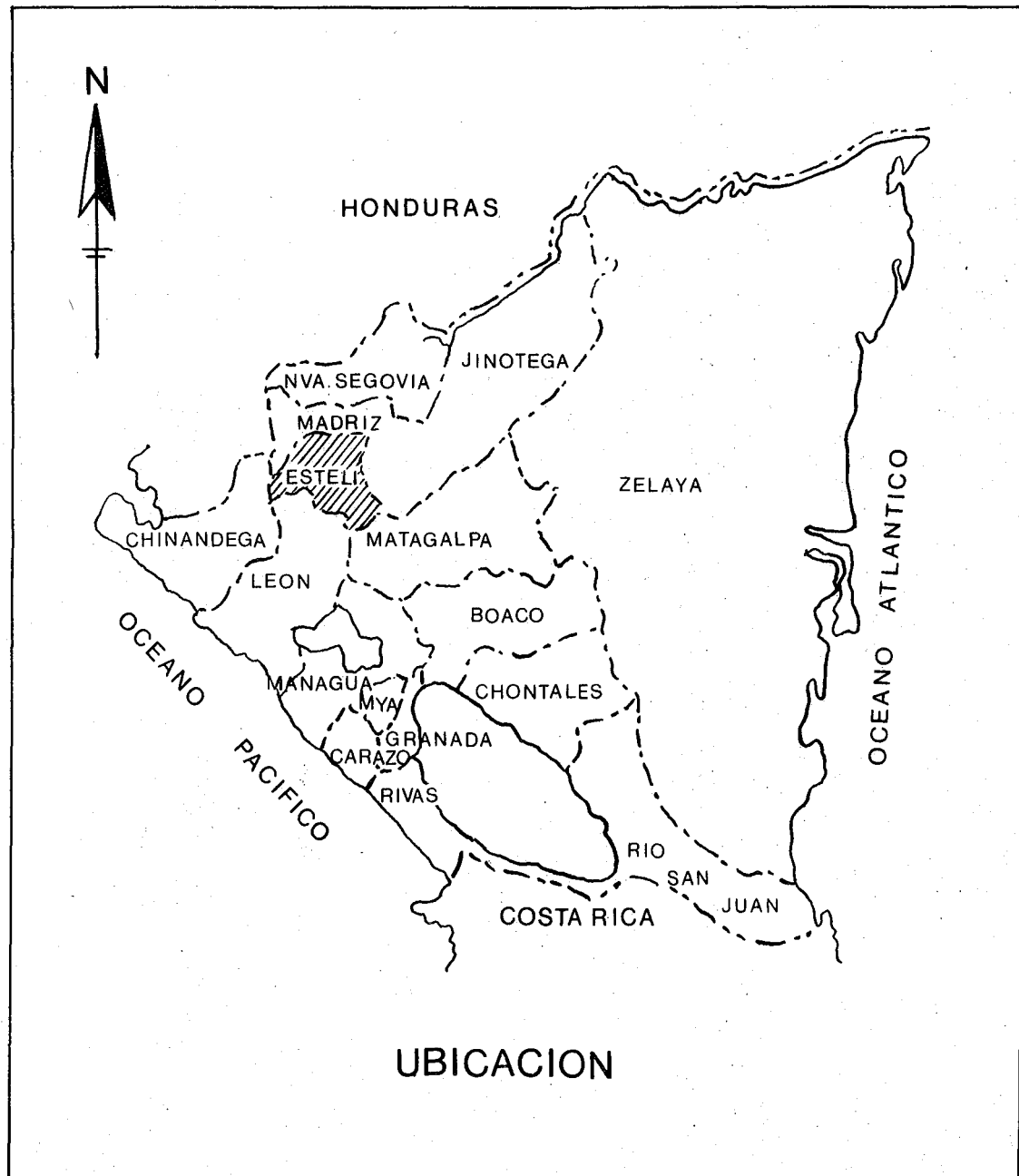
b. Population

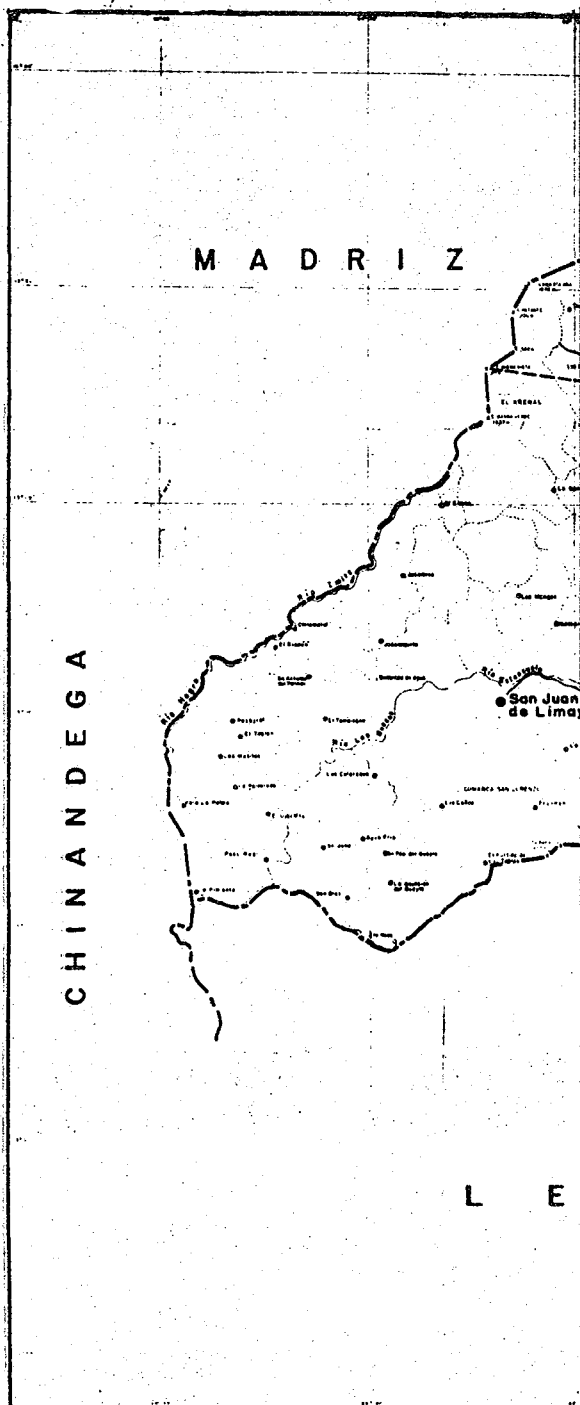
The population of the Department consists of 94,133 inhabitants living in an area of 2,199 Kms.² (OEDEC, 1977). The largest concentration of population is found in the municipio of Esteli which has 42,577 persons, just over 45% of the Department's total population. Of the municipal total, the urban population is 25,093 and the rural 16,584 inhabitants, making up 61% and 39% respectively of the municipio (see Table I, Appendix I). The city embraces approximately 27% of the Department's population.

c. Economic background

The main economic activities of the Department are agriculture and cattle raising. Most of the population plant staple crops (e.g. beans and maize) and Esteli is among the eight most important departments of the country for grain production. How-

Map I : Location of the Department of Esteli in Nicaragua





Project:

Continue:

Map II : The Department of Esteli

ever, the main agro-industrial activity is tobacco. This generates a large source for work in the municipios of Condega and Esteli, the main areas for tobacco. Other surrounding places growing tobacco transfer the leaves to the city for drying and processing. The crop is exported to US markets and secondly, to European countries. Prior to the Liberation War, tobacco generated around 4,061 jobs embracing agricultural activities, the drying of the leaves, curing and selection, and the elaboration and packeting of the product. There were also a number of administrative and transport jobs available (see Table II, Appendix I).

The cultivation of staple grains involves more than half of the economically active population, which grows in order of importance: maize, beans, sorghum and rice (see Table III, Appendix I). With regard to cattle raising, unfortunately there are no data available to illustrate the quantitative importance of this sector. Nevertheless, we can draw some inferences by the following facts: Esteli's ecology permits cattle raising and limits the cultivation of other products due to its low rainfall. On the other hand, the surrounding Departments of Chinandega, Leon, Madriz and Nueva Segovia raise cattle on a large scale, trading with Honduras through Esteli. During the war, approximately 60,000 head of cattle were transported out of the Northeastern region into Honduras. There is also some evidence that during the war many veterinary shops were destroyed at an estimated loss of ¢ 2 millions (approx. \$ US 200,000), indicating that there was an economic sector specializing in the supply of necessary items for livestock production (MINVAH, Esteli, 1979 : 23).

The commercial activity of the Department was centralized in the city. The city used to serve not only the surrounding towns and villages of its department but also the populations of other nearby departments. The city of Esteli was well known for its efficient supply of a wide range of goods in the Northern region. The commercial sector included electrical and domestic appliance businesses, car dealers, spare parts shops, cloth and fabric shops, large groceries and a great number of general shops which stocked a variety of items.

There were also furniture factories that exported to Central American countries; confectionary, clothing and ice factories as well as shoe workshops, saddleries, tanneries, and bakeries could be found. Commercially, the city was well located on the Panamerican Road, making possible easy access for neighbouring communities. Often people from the municipios of La Concordia, Yali (Department of Jinotega), Somoto (Madriz), San Nicolás (Leon), San sidro (Matagalpa), Ocotal (Nueva Segovia) and other towns came to buy in Esteli.

Summarizing, we can state that the main economic activity in the Department was agriculture and livestock production (58.4% of the economically active population), followed by the services (commerce, transport, banking, etc.) which were centralized in the city of Esteli (26.9%). Industrial, manufacturing and construction activities were also important, making up 14.7% of the economically active population (see Table IV, Appendix I).

In the next sections I examine the major social groups in Esteli, drawing upon textual materials taken from interviews

with a number of individuals in the town (see Appendix II for details). The data also depicts the responses of individuals and social groups to prevailing economic and political circumstances during the years leading up to the 1978 uprising.

2. The Economically Dominant Groups

a. Some historical trends

The following account, given by a well-known and politically articulate trade union leader (18)* reflects in various ways the process by which the different economic groups evolved over time:

"Approximately from the 1930's to 1945, we had a situation in which the "patronos" had their work but mixed with the peasants, that is to say, there was not a notorious class division, at least not in appearance. The relation between "patronos" and workers was blurred. There were rich people, but they were illiterate. That is why cultural differences were few. Traditionally rich families did not surpass more than ten. This place was a sort of isolated area. The system of trade was by means of wagons (carretas) pulled by oxen and horses to Leon. But then, with the introduction of roads which starts in 1944-45, the ideological penetration ("penetración ideológica") (of capitalism) is felt; ambitiousness begins and some people sell themselves to the National Guard. People are thrown off the land and from this time the rich are no longer regarded as "trusted friends". The mentality (mentalidad) of the sons of the rich changes and their relationship to the workers also changes..... you know, before, the rich used to give cows to the peasants and they were allowed to consume "cuajada" (fresh cheese).....but with the road, the market expanded and then the "cuajada" was no longer given. The patrón sold it and used to say: if you want it, buy it, or it will go to the market..... This was a new practice. Yes, the rich families were the ganaderos (cattle ranchers). Then the Worker's Club was formed

* Textual quotation in the case study are identified by the informants reference number. See Appendix II for details on the social characteristics of interviewees.

between 1946-50, and the rich didn't go there. They formed their own Club Social and the Lions Club. These associations bound together (aglutinaba) the bourgeoisie. The cultural and economic differences became sharper. Capitalist relations became accentuated (se acentuaron). The Asociacion de Ganaderos (Cattle Ranchers Association) was formed at the time when the (Panamerican) road was opened. The association was controlled by the rich who used to make their agricultural fairs (ferias con exposiciones)."

"During this time, workers and peasants observed the changes. When large-scale tobacco cultivation appeared, the confrontation (enfrentamiento) between workers and patronos was felt even more and the class struggle (lucha de clases) became more frontal. The small tobacco producers in the municipio of Esteli sold their tobacco leaves to TANIC (Tabacalera Nicaraguense). There was a collecting centre (centro de acopio) which purchased the product. TANIC had its own plantations ... the men were paid more than women and children workers. The workers' movement was concerned (about this situation) and started studying the Constitution and the Labour legislation (Código de Trabajo). In 1960, El Sindicato de Oficios Varios (Trade Union for Miscellaneous Workers) was formed which embraced shoemakers, masons, peasants and the like. In 1961, SCAAS (Trade Union of Construction and Similar Workers) was also organized, and together with the Shoemakers Union, the Workers' Federation of Esteli - FTE - was constituted. SCAAS had around 100 members, El Sindicato de Oficios Varios about 100 and the Shoemakers 40.

From the 1960's onwards the "gusanos" (Batista Cubans) came with the tobacco crop and formed the bourgeoisie of the 1960's onwards. And therefore we had a landlord bourgeoisie, a foreigner tobacco bourgeoisie....., and a commercial bourgeoisie. Together they were a repressive bourgeoisie (burguesía represiva)you know, approximately in 1965 the bourgeoisie met with the Commandant of the National Guard and with the Bishop (of Esteli) in order to 'destroy communism'. They set on fire a house and made terrorist actions, for example throwing molotov bombs to frighten the population... At that time, about 16 compañeros were jailed. It was a time of repression for Esteli.... yes, I remember there were fights also in Santo Domingo (in the Caribbean)...From that time, the armed struggle started to expand and the local bourgeoisie leaned more on the National Guard for repressive action. The gusanos used to give money to civilian groups to kill working class leaders.....".

The above account describes the character of the economically dominant groups in Esteli. This picture is complemented

by the views expressed by other individuals. For example, an adult worker, Don Gerardo (25), who at the time of the interview was working as Labour Inspector for the Municipal Council explained that:

".....in general, here in Esteli social classes had never been as sharp as in other places like Jinotega, Leon, Granada and Chinandega. Frequently, workers and landlords mixed, specially for recreational activities.....Where we had troubles with the landlords it was over Labour regulations, especially with the owners of the tobacco enterprises, Nicaragua Cigars, Cuba-Nica, Victor Tabaco of whom most were cuban-somocistas, that came in the 1960's. Traditionally, rich people born in Esteli are few,there are about seven to eight families. There are mainly cattle ranchers whose properties range from 2,000 to 15,000 manzanas. Some of these families have grown a lot and have become stratified within themselves. Thus one may find rich and working-class members within one family. With respect to the city, there are now about four rich landlords - after the triumph - living here and the rest of the better-off groups are involved in commercial and construction business. These are the so-called petty bourgeoisie....Some have their money distributed in various branches, for example, in commerce, agriculture, and small industry, and others have their money in just one business, like the ironmongers or chemists.....In the 1960's cubanos-gusanos came as technicians of INFONAC (Instituto de Fomento Nacional) to develop tobacco cultivation. Shortly afterwards, they became owners of farms and enterprises closely linked to Somoza's business and constituted the bourgeoisie of Esteli (burguesía Esteliana) and part of the national oligarchy (oligarquía nacional). They did not permit trade union organization.....They controlled amongst themselves the tobacco and wood business. They had a furniture factory in partnership with Somoza; now they are all gone. They left after the September insurrection (1978). Their properties are now in hands of the State".

Comments

From these statements and other views of local people, one can infer that, prior to the 1960's, there was a group of families who effectively held large extensions of land mainly for the production of livestock and grains. These landowners, as others in the country, maintained tenant sharecropping

relationships with the rural labourers. The latter were allowed to cultivate a plot of land belonging to the landlord and in return had to pay in kind a certain proportion of their crop or provide labour on the landlord's farm. Esteli's landlords seem to have followed the hacienda's pattern of cultivation. They cultivated grains for their own and their workers' consumption needs and they raised cattle. The livestock were marketed either in local or external (e.g. Honduras) markets. Nevertheless these landlords did not maintain an economically aggressive attitude towards profit maximization; neither did they invest substantially in other productive sectors such as industry. Thus, even though tobacco cultivation existed in Condega and Pueblo Nuevo before the coming of the Cubans, tobacco production marked the development of a branch of specialized, export-oriented agriculture. This resulted in the reinforcement of forms of production geared to capitalist markets. Coffee production, although it was found in some places of the Department, seems not to have had the same importance either in relation to land extension, as compared with cattle raising and grain production, or in economic terms of the returns from tobacco.

b. The emergence of commercially dominant groups in the city

One esteliano (26), coming from a background of modest resources, but who became a prominent figure among the businessmen, gave some account of the development of trade in the city:

"The route to Managua was opened in 1943....with macadan [i.e. tarred road]; before that, the trade was with Leon passing through El Sauce as that road was of macadan. But to travel from El Sauce to the city of Leon, and from there to Managua, one had to go by train. Therefore once the road to Managua

opened, everything was easier for travelling ... Esteli then, given its geographical location, offered good conditions for establishing businesses. People from the surroundings came to buy here, even people from places like Cuanigiquilapa and Cinco Pinos (Department of Chinandega) came through Limay to shop to Esteli. It was always like that. In 1965 trade and commerce grew a great deal. There was a demand for goods and for work. The city expanded due to the growth of the tobacco plantations; for example, in Villa Vieja (near the city) around 3,000 persons worked on tobacco farming and processing. Part of them were people from the city and part of them from the countryside. From that date, new barrios emerged: San Antonio, José Benito Escobar, Bella Vista, Aristeo Benavidez, Los Angeles, La Habra. Then, furniture factories appeared and the city continued growing. With the asphaltting of the Panamerican road the city flourished".

Comments

During the 1960's the city seems to have had a group of families running large enterprises (e.g. ironmongeries, furniture factories, motor spares and car dealer agencies, electrical appliance shops and clothing workshops) who, during that time, increased their economic assets. Prior to this, before the construction of the main access roads, the city functioned as a supply centre for the local region and some families must have specialized in trade and service activities. However, evidence for the period immediately prior to the Liberation struggle suggests that during the 1960's and 1970's there was a considerable growth in the number of merchants in the city. It would appear that there were something like 64 to 100 large enterprises (see Table V, Appendix I). The extent of the economic power of this commercial elite is also difficult to measure. I attempted to collect material on the amount of taxes paid to the Local Council for various periods but all the files and documents had been lost with the burning of the building during the war.

3. The Labouring Classes

Esteli has become well known for the fact that it has produced a number of important political leaders who come from a working class or peasant background. This fact is linked to the antiimperialist movement led by Sandino in the late 1920's and which had its first roots in the Northern regions of the country (e.g. Nueva Segovia, Madriz, Esteli, Jinotega, etc.). As a consequence, many peasant families and their descendants have brought with them the legacy of the Heroe of Las Segovias. The following accounts attempt to illustrate the deep influence that such a struggle has had on the population.

Margarita (16), the mother of Rulfo Marín Uclés, a deceased prominent Sandinista leader, and his sister gave us some details about his life one day when we met:

"Rulfo's father was Pio Marín Bellorín. He had been an old fighter in Sandino's army and first cousin to Ramón Raudales [a famous survivor of Sandino's guerrillas who died fighting in a battle with the National Guard in 1958]. Rulfo was born on the 5th of September of 1950 in El Jícaro, Department of Nuevo Segovia, but came to Esteli at the age of three. Thus he was reared here and lived in the barrio of El Calvario and grew up influenced by his uncle's - Ramón Raudales - ideas; I remember from the time he was an adolescent he read books like "The Mother" (Gorki's work), "Night of Torture" (by Rigoberto López Perez, a Nicaraguan poet that made justice to Somoza Garcia) and the like. He also met and studied with Filemon Rivera (a dead FSLN leader) and both were encouraged to do something against the oppression in which we all lived. For example, when Rulfo was 13, he started working in a shoe workshop and, shortly afterwards, went to the tobacco factory, La Padrón; there, Rene Molina (a somocista shareholder) invited him several times to participate in meetings with la patronal but Rulfo rejected any such invitations because he was mostly interested in the formation of the trade union. His intentions drove Molina to sack him and so he returned to Don Tano's shoe workshop. There he stayed until, together with Alesio Blandón (a dead combatant), he was accused of placing a bomb aimed at Fermin Meneses,

a National Guard Captain, and so decided to go underground. By the late 1960's [the mother explained] I had also become a FSLN colaboradora and had met great persons like Jose Benito Escobar,* Pedro Arauz Palacios, Oscar Turcios, Enrique Lorentes, etc., a lot of well-known Sandinist leaders.... Meanwhile, my son participated in battles against the National Guard and following the action in Las Delicias del Volga, Managua, and because of persecution, he had to leave the country. The National Guard was looking for him. He was then captured in Costa Rica along with others when attempting to rescue Carlos Fonseca [the founder of FSLN] who was a prisoner there. However all were later freed due to successful counter-action by the FSLN at the beginning of 1970. The prisoners were released and taken to Mexico and from there flew on to Cuba. From here onwards, I never saw my son again; he dedicated his life to study and the fight..... I learnt of his death in an armed confrontation carried out in la Cordillera de Sta. Isabelia, Zelaya only in 1976. Yes, he had died fighting to see our country free".

We also had the opportunity to meet Pepe (17), a young man who, at the time of fieldwork, was a fulltime political and military leader in one of the mass organizations. Pepe was born in Esteli around 1953 in El Zapote, a lower class barrio of the city. He studied at Primary School but could not continue as he needed to find a job to help his family. Thus, he started working in an ice cream parlour where he remained for nearly nine years and afterwards worked as a carpenter, as a bricklayer and, as he said: "I did all kind of jobs....life was very hard for the poor". Pepe then continued to describe how the influence of his closest friends drove him to help them attempt to change the state of affairs which oppressed his brothers, the peasants and the working class. He explained:

"The relationship I had with a particular friend was important in giving the hope that some day we could be free and have the chance to build a better society. His name was Filemon Rivera [a

* Jose Benito Escobar was a national sandinista leader who was killed in Esteli in July 1978.

tireless revolutionary who was among the founders of the FSLN here in Esteli in 1963]. I was very young but Filemon had been like a brother to me... You know, when he was born, his mother became very ill and because my mother was already breast feeding a tierno (baby) she undertook to breast feed both of them. We can then be considered real brothers. Filemon was very concerned about the conditions of the poor and, since I was a child, I used to help him and his friends in taking messages, finding out useful information and listening to his ideas. Later, around 1966, Filemon adopted a clandestine life, since the National Guard was trying to arrest him because of his involvement in trade union organization. I then used to lodge friends in my house. My place was always a 'security home' (casa seguridad) the name given to those houses which were considered as reliable and safe for holding meetings and for keeping political documents, etc. Filemon was a well prepared in all senses combatant and his younger brother had also become very concerned with political matters. Hence, I was a close colaborador of them. When Filemon died, I went on working with his brother. Once I assisted him when he had contracted "lepra de la montaña" [leishmaniasis, a kind of leprosy] and it was very difficult to cure. Somoza had forbidden the sale of medicines to treat it, because he thought guerrillas might suffer from it and, for him, it was better to let them die".

Pepe continued working quietly incognito until the 1978 September uprising when he decided to leave the city and go to the mountains. His wife died at the end of the 1979 April battle giving birth to a child and Pepe now continues working energetically for the revolution. Pepe is well-known as a committed revolutionary of proletarian origins.

In Esteli, there was another popular figure recognized for his long history of militancy for the working class, Don Augusto. He was born in the 1930's and, from being very young, he learnt the shoe maker's trade. He has been an active leader who participated in the reorganization of the Shoemakers' Trade Union in the early 1950's. Besides being involved in one of the most dynamic trade unions, Don Augusto was also motivated by the

miserable living conditions around him. He joined the Socialist Party (PS), which at that time was the only organization that was concerned with working class issues, and enrolled in the CGT(i), the Party's Confederation of Workers, until he became one of its prominent leaders. In 1963, Don Augusto was among the founding members of the FSLN in the Department, working in alliance with the Socialist Party which together formed the MR (Movilización Republicana). This organization, however, split up after differences in strategy arose: the Party emphasized legal - civil action whereas the FSLN took the decision that little could be achieved through normal electoral means and believed in the armed struggle.

Don Augusto (18) described in a general form, part of his rich experience within the workers' organization:

"I did political work in Esteli until 1969. The city was the operation centre of the FSLN and from here we spread out towards Jinotega, Leon, Madriz, Nueva Segovia and part of Matagalpa. Shortly after the FSLN foundation in La Laguna, we attempted to organize our first peasant trade union in Condega among the coffee labourers of the private haciendas. After this we organized the Nacascolo Trade Union in Leon, and underground political schools in Gamalote (near Yali, Jinotega), San Jeronimo, Condega, Bijagual, and Madriz. We were doing regional work, because as I said, from here, we planned the political operations for the surrounding area, searching to form grassroot organizations (organizaciones de base) in order to establish a broad network of support and advice for the Trade Unions and Peasants Associations. In 1964, the enemy discovered that I was a FSLN member and attempted to catch me several times; in 1966 I was captured transporting explosives. At that time I was working in the gold mine of El Limón, Leon, which is situated at some two days walk cross-country. However, I was released after six months due to an amnesty agreed in 1967. I was ill in those days, and while I was resting, my compañeros clashed with the National Guard and the enemy captured me again; so I spent another nine months in jail while the trial took place. Two compañeros took responsibility of the charges against me because they knew I was ill and only in this way

would I be allowed to go into hospital. The hospital was in Leon. I stayed there for four months until one of the doctors helped me to run away. Later on, I came to form part of the Columna of Pedro Altamirano in Senica, in the Department of Atlantic Coast, and began fighting militarily (lucha Militar). I was also jailed in Honduras, injured several times and spent nearly nine years in the mountains and tropical lowland areas of Zelaya engaging in both political and military work. I returned to Esteli after the triumph.....".

Comments

In Esteli, individuals, groups of persons and whole families have shown a consistent attitude towards their social class position. As we have seen above and will be discussed later, the population of the city - and of the countryside - in general, but particularly the agro-industrial workers and craftsmen, have participated actively in political movements, pursuing not only general economic objectives but also liberation from the dictatorial regime. Furthermore, among these exploited groups, the consciousness to delineate the main enemy in the different periods of their struggle seems to have been well developed. This war built upon the earlier political experiences associated with this particular region which had been a centre of resistance against the dictatorship and foreign intervention. Added to this, we have the fact that many individuals, through their own personal experiences of exploitation and of the contradictions of the system as a whole, were led to define their interests in class terms and to link this with existing anti-imperialist Sandino ideology. The three accounts given above show how the specific social and economic environment stimulated political consciousness and permitted more radical attitudes to crystallise at particular junctures.

4. The Middle Socio-Economic Sector

This sector is rather heterogeneous. Usually one includes in the middle sector those who are economically not directly linked to the ownership of means of production and who ideologically maintain an ambiguous class position. Indeed, oscillation seems to be one of the features of middle sectors (see Wright, 1979). Nevertheless, as we are mostly interested in looking at people's perceptions and behaviour related to events within their local context in order to obtain an image of the different social groupings, we will leave aside the theoretical discussion of such issues.

In Esteli, as in other Nicaraguan towns, there are groups regarded as neither belonging to the economically dominant groups nor to the working or peasant class. Furthermore, within these groups, individuals present diverse views and attitudes towards specific happenings, sometimes responding to their perception of their present social status and sometimes apparently acting independently of it. In other words, their behaviour may vary according to their expectations and/or to the opportunities and experiences of their life careers. The following summarized examples illustrate this.

There was an individual, Don Raul, who for a long time ran his parent's farm of middle size. He was estimated by people as having "mas o menos sus reales" (i.e. he was fairly well off) and as being a small landlord. While running the farm in which he had a share, Don Raul and his wife decided to move to the town as their children were of school age. One of his brothers, a medical doctor, was interested in politics and had been jailed several times because of his antigovernment position. At the

beginning of the 1970's, the two brothers used to hold conversations about the country's political and economic situation, and Don Raul started to become interested in this issue. Later on, he arrived at the conclusion that the country needed indeed real structural changes and that these changes would never be carried out while Somoza remained in power. Shortly after, he also realized that electoral parties would not be the solution for real change and would not be able to get rid of the dictatorship. As a result, Don Raul entered into contact with FSLN elements and began to collaborate with them. As time went on and as revolutionary actions increased, he decided to sell his share in the farm, giving a considerable part of the money to the revolutionary cause. Each time Don Raul became more and more involved in politics, to the extent of working as a full-time member of the Frente. His family (wife and children) also experienced a radicalization with respect to ideological position in such a way that each member of the family took on their own responsibilities within the pre-insurrectional movement. Thereafter, Don Raul and his grown-up children (aged 14, 17, 20 and 23-years) came to fight in different spheres of the struggle (i.e. as guerillas, in the student movement, in CDCs, etc.). At the time of meeting them - after the Sandinista victory - all of them continued to work solidly for the new regime.

Socorro (21), a teacher of approximately 25 years, described her family's story as follows:

"We were eight brothers and sisters, all concerned with furniture making as my father had been a cabinet maker. We all had been born and raised here in Esteli. My father fought with Sandino in the regions of Las Segovias and therefrom conscientization had come within the family (la concientización era de familia). I

became a teacher and worked in a primary school, but, you see, I never taught the Constitution because I was conscious that the government was not good at all. Thus, when my pupils asked me whether Nicaragua was free, I responded to them saying, Nicaragua is not free, neither sovereign nor independent, and, as a result, I had troubles with the school director who was a somocista, together with three other teachers. They did not share my conscientization at all and used to call me "la conscientizadora" ('conscientizor'). Moreover, they used to gossip about the fact that I had connections with the guerrillas, putting me at risk before others. I remember telling them: Look, I am working in education because there is a need, but to my students I must teach the reality...".

"My brothers were also anti-somocistas and that is why a so-called Martinez, an official of the genocide (la genocida) National Guard, had given the order that my whole family should be exterminated completely. They killed my three brothers and one day Somoza's secret police (la seguridad) came to the school looking for me. Fortunately, I did not turn up at the school. I was really lucky!".

On the other hand, there is the case of Don Felipe (27), approximately 50 years old, a former owner of a boarding house which he had managed in the 1960's until the end of the 1970's. He seemed to have had a fair education. On various occasions some neighbours of the town referred to Don Felipe in the following manner:

"During great part of his life, Don Felipe was a neutral person, a "no pro-Frente" person ["non-pro-Frente", i.e. indifferent]. He was dedicated to his own business and did not care about the people suffering. He had three sons who were students. Two of them started to become involved in political activities and one day his daughter was discovered to be linked with the FSLN movement; thereby, she had to attend the tribunals for questioning. But being afraid of this, she decided to go underground. Later, she was killed by the National Guard and then, ha! you should have seen how Don Felipe reacted! He reacted against the Frente, blaming the muchachos for forcing his daughter to leave. In addition, another of his sons had become concerned about the student movement in Esteli and had problems too. Hence, Don Felipe had no choice but to make himself "sandinista a puro tubo" (i.e. meaning to make an effort to understand the Frente's aims) and gradually came to grasp the people's and the country's situation."

There was also another type of case which was very common among the middle commercial sector. This can be illustrated by the example of Don Severo (28). He comes from the Eastern region of the country but settled in Esteli 15 years ago, where he established a middle-sized electrical appliance and warehouse shop and lived a fairly comfortable life. Don Severo had two children - from two different mothers - and had looked after them without their mothers because, as he put it, 'women are full of problems'. Thereupon, he lived peacefully, taking care of his children and running his shop. He expressed the view that all he wanted from life was to work in peace, earn enough money for his sons' education and give them the opportunity to study in a foreign country for further training in the fields they might choose. During the 1978-79 political turmoil, he did as many of the other merchants: he closed his shop when the Chamber of Commerce asked shopkeepers to do so and tried to save all his goods from the vandalism carried out mainly by the National Guard. Don Severo became aware of the destructiveness of such forces and, when the uprising and bombings came, he left the town with his children until everything was over. Later, he came back, worried about what had happened to his business premises. He has now started trying to recover the economic loss he suffered as a result of the war and continues with his main goals. As he says, "I do not like trouble of any kind; all I want is some aid to retrieve what I have lost and peace for my children to grow up happily".

Comments

The brief accounts show just some of the life perspectives and behaviour patterns assumed by middle sector individuals from Esteli, although it must not be implied that these are exclusive to this group since they may appear as elements in individuals or groups belonging to other classes. Nevertheless, the middle sector, because of its ambiguous structural position, espouses heterogeneous ideologies that make its individuals susceptible to either dominate or subordinate class identification. In other words, sometimes their life experiences move them towards a gradual political radicalization (e.g. Don Raul and his family); or they develop an existing attitude rooted in the family's past (e.g. the teacher Socorro); or they change their orientation towards life due to some personal and determinant experiences (e.g. Don Felipe); or they continue to hold established views, despite changes at the local and extra-local levels, thus attempting to ignore them as long as they themselves are not directly affected (e.g. Don Severo). Hence the heterogeneity of the middle sector as a social force and their ideological permeability allows for the coexistence of students with a defined class ideology, small entrepreneurs acting as patronos, wage earners aiming to become entrepreneurs, feigned altruistic professionals and so on. Only if specific life experiences or key events intervene do they radically change their ideological orientations.

5. Previous Organizational Experience in the Liberation Movement

In this section I examine some forms of organizational experience which constituted the basis for the building of the infrastructure of the liberation movement beginning in 1978.

The importance of this experience is that groups working in different fields converge to give the liberation movement its populist character and in order to achieve its immediate aim: the overthrow of the dictatorship.

a. The First Trade Unions

In the past the city of Esteli was a centre for craft production, such as the leather industry, serving the city and rural populations. Once the Central American Common Market and the introduction of manufactured goods from overseas countries expanded and penetrated the Nicaraguan towns, local craft production decreased. Nonetheless the role of these original craft workshops was important as a starting point for the development of further forms of organization.

Don Damián (20), an old worker in his middle 50s, who had worked for more than forty years as a shoemaker, gave us some information about craft work in Esteli and about the first attempts at trade union organization:

"...I am a worker, a worker during all my life and a worker who has always liked to read. In former times, the main source of labour were crafts: saddlery, for example, was born in the colonial period when horses and cows were brought by the Spaniards, and horses were the main means of transport. Blacksmithing was also an important activity, closely related to the needs of the countryside... By the 1930's and 1940's shoemaking was quite important. Between 1945 and 1952, there was a large shoe workshop, the largest one we ever had, which had more than 20 operarios. This was owned by Amadeo Rodriguez and included his own tannery. There was another large one, the workshop owned by Ramon Altamirano. I remember there were conflicts between the operarios and the management. Among other crafts in Esteli we could find carpentry, tailoring, jewelry and hatmaking (made of palm leaves). I think, however, that shoemakers were the most important: In 1945 there were about 25 workshops with 10-15 labourers working in each: by 1950 there were more than 50, with from six to 20 workers

in each. The shoe industry had flourished and we produced all kinds of shoes (for the countryside, fine and semifine), but thereafter the footwear industry from El Salvador and secondly from Guatemala affected the Nicaraguan shoe market to such a degree that by 1965-66 there were only about 15 workshops left. We, the shoemakers, have been the most dynamic group, as I said before, because we were the first to organize our Trade Union soon after the Labour Law was promulgated in 1945. Among the founding members were Antonio Ruiz, José María Palma, Antonio Rodríguez, Sebastián Vega Ch., Humberto Gonzalez, myself and others.....".

Throughout other conversations we had, it seems that the shoemakers' Trade Union was reorganized several times and broadened to include leather and tannery workers. Apparently at the end of the 1950's, rural workers in the tobacco farms began to make economic demands (e.g. payment for the seventh day of the week). Then, in the 1960's, as we have already explained, SCAAS and FTE. According to Don Damián, the Federation had around 1,000 members. These trade unions were originally promoted by the CGT(i) (controlled by the Socialist Party).

During the 1970's, repression was severe and it was very difficult to maintain a permanent working class organization. There was also the problem of the penetration of 'pro-patronal' trade unions. For example, around 1976-77, there was an attempt to form a union in the furniture making factory "La Princesa" owned by Somoza and partners. This attempt was headed by the Nicaraguan Workers' Centre (CTN) under the guidance of the Social Christian Party (PSC), but when the majority of the workers wanted to go on strike, the leaders entered into negotiations with the management in order to neutralize the movement. This was considered as a betrayal by the workers and new attempts to continue organizing the union failed.

The FSLN and CGT(i) are considered in Esteli as the most important organizations for promoting workers' interests. In the last few years, before the overthrow of Somoza, the FSLN performed the major organizing role. For example, among the tobacco workers a clandestine union was initiated in 1977, consisting of 'Revolutionary Working Committees' (COR), each with ten members who were responsible for transmitting the programme of the group. According to one of the present-day leaders, the tobacco workers achieved a major mobilization in Esteli during 1978-79, especially in the Nicaragua Cigars factory which embraced 500 wage earners. In this factory, the workers were able to train their own cadres and were capable of facing up to the management represented by Rene Molina (a somocista shareholder) who had guards around the building to prevent any trouble.

Comments

The organizative experience in Esteli seems to have emerged in formal terms when the Labour Law was published and when the Socialist Party was constituted (1944) (see Latin American Bureau, 1979) focusing on organizing the working population. The attempts, however, to consolidate the first unions were hindered by many circumstances: the continual repression by the regime of union leaders, the threats made to sack workers, the low development of the productive forces and the lack of experience of some union leaders in finding the right mechanisms to face internal structural problems. Consequently the battle to organize the different working groups suffered continual set-backs which prevented a stable

and enduring trade union from developing. Nevertheless, the workers learnt from each experience and persisted in organizing the working centres, thus creating the subjective conditions for dealing with later events.

It is important to bear in mind that the trade union movement in Nicaragua is relatively young and its background in many ways specific. For more than half a century, Esteli's main group of workers were craftsmen and, although the number of workshops was large containing apprentices as well, each workshop seldom had more than twenty workers. The first unions were characterised by the dispersal of membership throughout the city and by the fact that the owners of workshops, as well as workers, were allowed to join. This placed limitations on the development of strong unions. It was not until the 1960's, when crafts became affected by the competition with mass-produced goods and when large-scale tobacco cultivation for export was introduced, that the union movement acquired new perspectives. This was also stimulated by the appearance of other workers' groups (e.g. SCAAS), which resulted in part from the growth of the city and which led to a sharpening of the patron-worker relationship.

b. The Christians in the Movement

Most of the persons interviewed recognized the role played by the local Church in the conscientization process among the population of Esteli. Although there were many persons conscious of their role as Christians in Nicaraguan society, it was considered of fundamental importance to extend and transmit the new interpretation of the Christian task in the ongoing

situation of the country. Hence, progressive elements of the National Church started encouraging activities oriented towards questioning the social order and, therefore, implicitly the ruling regime.

Trying to find out details about the Christian participation in the liberation movement, we had a conversation with an Esteliano priest (2), who gave us the following information:

"Overall from the publication of the Medellin Documents, the Church in Latin America began to read the Bible from new points of view, adapting its content to our actual reality (la realidad). Then we agreed that the Gospels, for example, should not be read out of political context because scientifically they must have, and continue to have, a relationship with that reality. Furthermore, we found that many texts like those written by the Prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah were rich in linking religious beliefs to practice, starting from an analysis of the political situation in Israel. Revelations and other biblical passages have been reinterpreted and reinforced through reference to contemporaneous materials, such as the Encyclicals of Populorum Progressum from Pope Paulo VI, Pacem in Terris by John XXIII and Redemptor Hominis by John Paul II."

"Consequently, the Movimiento Cursillista took on the role of being a vehicle for raising social consciousness concerning our country's reality. In Esteli, this movement started to grow between 1973-74 in the barrio of El Calvario [in this barrio there is a Church under the direction of a Latin American priest] which every since has displayed one of the most combative attitudes among the people of this city. Nearly all persons are cursillistas and the local priest motivated others by spreading the political message of the cursillos [discussion groups] to the rest of the population. What were the steps of this process? : first, there was a selection of biblical texts. We started by giving cursillos to adult people, the majority of whom were of proletarian extraction with known opposition to existing social order. When we observed the good outcome of this, youth from all socio-economic groups were invited to participate. The aim was to bring unity, to join the rich with the proletarian, to make them walk along a single path.....of course, we had some difficulties at the beginning with that mixture: at times the bourgeois elements complained about the selected texts, and so, to counter this attitude, we used the Encyclicals, and had good results. The cursillos

lasted for a week. Second, there was a 'nourishment phase' (etapa de alimentación). In each school, in each barrio, there were coordinators responsible for holding meetings twice a week so as to continue studying materials of a political content about the situation (la problemática), using biblical citations to orient the discussion of solutions. And third, shortly after the initiation of these cursillos, some priests established links with the Frente, and the suggestion was made to organize student or barrio committees That is how many cursillistas became members of the Frente. In a way, it was like a door, like a path leading to the Frente."

"We had multiple problems going ahead with the cursillos; one was in choosing the participants. There were people who wanted to participate only to know what the discussions were about and to be piadosos (pious persons) - without doing anything more practical - just to know how we thought.... On occasion one of them was caught recording the discussions...nobody knew him; he was an oreja (spy) Measures were taken to control the entrance of new cursillistas by giving responsibilities to the old ones in recruiting new members, acting therefore as padrinos (sponsors)..... Another problem was to face the rich who disagreed with the cursillistas. The latter were seen as enemies and repression was directed against them. These rich persons considered the need for change but rejected any major structural change... The process of concientization for liberation - against Somoza - took years of work and it even continues nowadays.....".

With regard to the rural population, the priest explained that,

"...after the cursillos for the urban population, base communities (comunidades de base), which were originated in Brazil, were formed in the scattered settlements and villages. These base communities consisted of groups of believers. The most honest and conscious companero functioned as the person responsible for transmitting our orientation. This position was called the 'Word Delegate' (Delegado de la Palabra). His main duty was to fight on behalf of the rural community and to raise consciousness about the social conditions. Many of these delegados were put in jail, and many of them are now cadres of mass organizations.....Yes, the purpose of the base communities was similar to the purpose of the cursillos in Esteli."

Don Juan (3), one of the many Christians who received cursillo training and who participated in insurrection told us his experience in the movement:

"I am among the oldest cursillistas of Esteli, and I think that the cursillos played a fundamental role in giving consciousness to the people here. This religious system called the people to live a Christian life, not merely by going to the Church to kneel down..., while people were being massacred. The grounds for motivating Christians towards liberation was the desire for the birth of a 'new man' (hombre nuevo), and a new consciousness (hombre consciente). Therefore, we had to be committed to setting an example of how to be real Christians by directly participating in the solution of our problems."

"The cursillos were carried out with 30 to 40 persons. They were either people with 'reales' (better-off) or proletarians, like me, [He has a small craft workshop] and peasants. The bourgeoisie did not like the idea of sleeping together with proletarians, but after some time, they got used to it... The aim was learning to live together, no matter what our social class differences; we were united by the idea of creating a new man, to liberate men from their selfish mentality, from the yo que pierdismo, which means that attitude by which someone goes into a street, sees someone dying but does not do anything to help. This is indifference. So you see, to eliminate these attitudes it was necessary to organize ourselves in order to fight for our rights for a better community, for a better society. An organized man working for revolution had to motivate the people for the struggle which was to benefit not a single person but everybody. The Christian should be a person of action watching over everybody's needs."

"Our work of conscientization had to be discreet (escondidas).... Christians and non-Christians were persecuted by la genocida guardia somocista. Thus, by 1977, the people here were strongly motivated, ready to fight against the enemy. Then, a child, Wilfredo Valenzuela, was assassinated.... You should have seen that, the people were indignant and difficult to control. This boy was with a group of children shouting protest slogans in a street when a criminal named Meneses passed in his vehicle and shot Wilfredo dead. With this act of felony - one of thousands - the people gathered and launched themselves on to the street protesting. After the burials, the people burnt down the house of a known somocista, a Rene Molina..... So, you see, the city of Esteli, which in its majority is Christian, was already motivated, the fruits of the Christian cursillos could be seen."

Dona Amanda (24), a housewife involved in the Christians'

Movement gave her views:

"I come from an antisomocista family and my first contact to the fight against the regime was through the Church, in the countryside when I met a Delegate of the Word. This was at the beginnings of the 1970's. I received my cursillo from Father Garcia Laviana [a combatant priest who died during the war]. From there, I went working in the rural communities of Tres Esquinas, Santa Cruz, Las Lagunas and others, bringing the message I had received during the cursillo. One of my satisfactions was that we saw the struggle for creating 'the new man' as one which everybody had to participate in and to contribute to. Moreover, we had to get rid of the resignation and conformity of the peasantry. We were committed to motivate them, showing that there was a way out of their ignorance. We were sure that the only way to create 'the new man' was by making real changes, by getting rid of the dictatorship through the armed struggle. I was willing to work in anything to achieve all this and, as a consequence, I got in touch with the FSLN - a priest helped me. It was then 1975 and known combatants started coming to my place."

"The Christian cursillos made me take consciousness as a Christian, and thereafter I acquired political consciousness; I became integrated to the Frente's activities because it was the only vanguard (vanguardia) which could lead us to liberation and the Frente was aware Somoza would not go just like that.....Then, in 1977, I came associated to AMPRONAC, being among the first members [in Esteli], together with another 30 women. We organized activities for the defence of Human Rights and organized the population to protest against political prisoners. As repression turned sharper, we participated jointly with the different student organizations (FER, AEU, AES, AEP) - covering university, secondary and primary school students - in taking over churches to make our claims and protests heard. Here in Esteli, all sectors joined in because we have always been sandinistas since Sandino's time and, in my case for instance, when I met top sandinista leaders, they knew I was helping them because I was a conscious Christian (cristiana conciencia).....".

Comments

Testimonies about the important role played by the Church, especially through the Christian cursillos, were abundant. This role, however, was linked to a process of wider change in the Latin American Catholic Church which started in 1962 at the II Vatican Council summoned by Pope John XXIII and gained more momentum in the II General Assembly of the Latin American Episcopate - CELAM - in Medellin, Colombia in 1968. This first event opened the door to a modernizing process at all levels of the Church, thus implying the direct participation of all catholics in a renovating process. The Medellin Conference constituted a further step forward: for the first time, the role of the Church was analysed within the framework of capitalist dependency, and exploitation. The issue of how the Church might help the oppressed was raised and a number of priests took the view that they should become more directly involved in the liberation struggle, whether or not the hierarchy approved. Hence pastoral work among poorer classes underwent a transformation and, as a consequence, young priests started to elaborate a new theology, which was to be called 'the theology of liberation'. The works of the pioneers of this renovating movement (movimiento renovador) produced a great impact on the relationship of priests to their congregation. Leonardo Boff's book, Jesus Christ Liberator and Gustavo Gutierrez' work Theology for Liberation (published after the Medellin's Conference) challenged even more the traditional conception of the role of the Church in Latin America. By the beginning of the 1970's, many local parishes had focused their work action on programmes dealing with various economic, political, social and cultural

problems (see Moura, C., et al, 1981).

In Latin America, the Church at all levels of its structure, carried out a re-reading of the Holy Scriptures. In Nicaragua, the most advanced groups analysed them from the point of view of the oppressed and concluded that the Christian ideology was more akin to socialism than to capitalism. On the other hand, the country's political and economic situation led them to see the need for structural changes which, it was realised, required a fundamental change in the political system. Their position coincided with other groups and revolutionary organizations.

At the micro-level, in Esteli, the Church materialized its actions through the cursillista movement. This was to constitute another catalyst in the liberation struggle. The Christian leaders visualized their work in collaboration with FSLN, supporting the armed struggle as the only means to overthrow the dictatorship. Both forces complemented each other in terms of canalizing discontent, working for structural change and building a new society. This alliance of a deeply rooted Christian ideology with that of a revolutionary movement born generations earlier in the Sandino organisation and now given an explicit Marxist orientation, seems to have produced an effective formula for the unification of forces having a populist character. Moreover, the direct involvement of Christian priests and the participation of individuals as Christians in a movement of such a nature was a new event which in practice produced new conceptions of popular participation which shaped the development of grassroots organization. As I describe in Chapter III, the concrete expression of this dynamic

Chapter III

The Emergence of the Liberation Movement in Esteli

In this chapter I analyse the ways in which groups of different social backgrounds came together in the formation of a single anti-dictatorial movement. This process in Esteli was shaped by the wider political and economic forces of Nicaragua, as well as by specific local events. Although the FSLN came to play the major political and military role, the success of the movement must be understood in terms of how various groups and organizations, such as FER, AES, AMPRONAC and CDC's, developed common commitments and provided the 'infrastructure' for the insurrections. My account of the part played by various organizations, especially the CDC's, of the changing economic and political situation, draws upon individuals' perceptions of the evolving political process.

a. Pre-insurrectional background

By 1977, the economic and political situation led towards an increasing agitation among various social groups for lifting the state of siege, censure and martial law which Somoza had imposed since December 1974. The organized sectors (the unions, students, etc.) were growing considerably and people were manifesting their dissatisfaction widely. This phenomenon embraced the most important cities and towns of the country.

Let us now provide a rapid overview of people's perceptions of the situation in 1977-78. In the interviews the following statements were made:

"We were not allowed the freedom to study....."

"Youngsters were jailed without any reason....."

"We were not safe to walk in the streets....."

"There was no freedom to speak....."

"The somocistas could do what they pleased..."

"Anybody could be accused of being a sandinista and therefore, jailed, tortured or simply shot....."

"We had no freedom to organize our trade unions....."

"Life was turning unbearable: no well paid jobs; goods were more expensive each time....."

"The guards were committing atrocities amongst the people....."

"A lot of peasants were killed....."

"We were fed up with Somoza and the somocistas....."

"Somoza and his allies must go...we will make them go....!"

The acute lack of freedom and high insecurity in all quarters of life drove the people of Esteli to use all available means to speak out against their unfair living conditions (e.g. they seized churches, schools, and organised marches). Nevertheless, as was pointed out by Don Juan (3), with the assassination of the child, Wilfredo Valenzuela, the people stormed on to the streets and burned down a somocista house. This was at the end of 1977. According to another informant (13), "Since that day, Esteli became restless."

Mario (23), a transport manager and important cursillista in 1977, said:

"We were conscious of the need to speed up the process of organizing. One of the first activities - in that period - was to organize a census in the barrio of El Calvario (because it was one of the most active of the city) to see how many children lived without proper care and attention. In December 1977, the cursillistas decided to bring a piñata (decorated ball) and presents for them. We collected a lot of

money and neighbours from other barrios saw with enthusiasm how we acted on behalf of the poor.... Two weeks later, the people from El Calvario gathered and decided to organize the barrio themselves. From that meeting, the idea to organize the whole city emerged. People from all social classes, middle and poor, supported the idea. The enthusiasm was such, that in two months the whole city was organized, with the exception of the town centre. Thus, each had its own barrio committee. The idea was to bring neighbours together to make claims for water, electricity, improvement of streets, aid for poor children and so on, but at the same time raising consciousness on other issues such as the need for changing society, the danger we all lived under [due to repression] and that we should stand together in such a way as to give the people the opportunity to exercise power."

Don Nacho (22), a resident of the barrio José Benito

Escobar, told us one day:

"This barrio was always marginal....we were in such a state that in order to collect water we had to rise early, because by 5.00 a.m. there was no water at all. Owing to our poor living conditions we saw the need to organize a Committee of Communal Development... it was an initiative from the Church. Initiatives for political work had also been given by the FSLN but this was clandestine work because one could be killed if the enemy came to know of it...the same José Benito Escobar [killed in July 1978] used to work here."

"At the beginning, the Committee worked slowly... people could only see their own interests and not that of the whole community. Later on, they progressed and saw others problems. When the repression came, fraternity and consciousness increased. For instance, when someone was captured, everyone felt it as if it were from their own flesh (su propia carne). One did not feel alone and our morale was high; rapidly 60 persons could gather and march to the city protesting on behalf of our compañeros in jail.... as I said, our morale was high and so repression was felt less intensively.....By the middle of the year (1978) we knew that at any moment, the people would rise up. We were conscious that some day not so far away we would have to fight [meaning, an armed struggle] and that one could lose one's life."

"The CDC's began to organize when Pedro Joaquin Chamorro was killed.... [see Chapter I]...because there was a paro (strike) and instructions were given to make buzones [hidden places to keep different stuffs] for medicines, food, etc.: people were more cooperative amongst themselves when the National Guard

was standing over them [i.e. threatening them], insecurity itself made people unite, posta (vigilance) was carried out at street corners to protect meetings. We worked very close each to the other."

Dona Maria (9), whom I met through a former organizer of the CDC's, a resident of the barrio Igor Ubeda and a mother of adult children, told us:

".....when Pedro Joaquín Chamorro was killed on 10th January (1978) the people launched themselves into the streets in protest (manifestaciones), making pancartas (banners), demanding that the regime go, nobody could stop them.....los muchachos [a word used for referring to the revolutionary youth] were taking over State and private schools. They had their own organizations like the FER; also the chavalos [referring to children of primary school age] participated significantly by seizing their schools like the Escuela Anexa which was seized around May; they were very brave you know, they used to shout: "no queremos rosquillas, queremos fusiles y metralletas!" (we do not want rosquillas - a kind of biscuit - we want rifles and machine guns). The Parents Association (Asociación de Padres de Familia) of the schools backed their children, brought them food and looked after them....everybody was united..... we were receiving advice through our quarter committee, and were preparing everything for a fight; for example, shortly after the muchachos [FSLN] captured the Palace in August, there was a general strike and the watchword was: después del paro, viene el disparo [after the strike, comes the firing]. Thus we were sure that, at any moment, war was coming."

Alberto (15), who had similar experiences to many students explained:

"The situation here in Esteli was influenced by the national one. The students had been promoting and participating in street marches, together with other groups. It was a generalized repression, a repression against the whole country; with the attacks on the San Carlos garrisons by the FSLN (tercerista) in October 1977, repression increased, and we could not live in peace any more: workers, peasants, students, women, children were killed and tortured every day. The people knew who the enemy was, the people knew the National Guard was defending a clase de pocos [class of few] who wanted to defend a regime of exploitation....you see, there was exploitation by

one person against the people; the dictatorship was alone, even the burguesia criolla [referring to the opposition bourgeoisie] had become apart from it because Somoza was not allowing them any more to interfere in his concerns."

"We all wanted Somoza to leave the country, but we had to prepare ourselves for that fight. He would not go just like that...we had to prepare the population in all senses. As you know, the Frente was divided into three groups: the insurreccional or the so-called terceristas, the GPP and the Proletarios; I first belonged to the GPP but moved to the terceristas. The GPP mainly concentrated on political and organizative work while the terceristas were concerned that el pueblo se fogueara, se defendiera con las armas en la mano y no solo con las manos [the people were trained so that they could defend themselves with arms in their hands and not just with their bare hands]. Most of the people in Esteli were GPP but as long as there was a need to defend themselves in other ways, the GPP realized the importance of taking up arms (de tomar las armas); thus, during the insurrections we all worked jointly. Discussions between the GPP and the terceristas were few [there was no FSLN-proletarios] because we all realized that protest marches distributing papeletas (anti-dictatorial propaganda) and burning tyres did not stop the enemy, did not stop the guard from killing. The people of Esteli.....were organized and wanted arms to face the genocida. We wanted to enter in combat against them."

"My participation at the beginning was with students in the FER. We used to do political work in El Calvario and coordinate our operations with propaganda activities; later on, I went underground to the montaña and lived with peasants. That was a great experience because we learned things we did not know before; they gave us shelter, food and helped us to survive. In turn, we talked to them about the country's condition and the need for change, we made attempts to teach reading and writing but it was difficult under those conditions. Anyway, our relationship with peasants was very close, we saw their involvement in the struggle in sharing with us lo poco que tenía [what little they had] and observed their progressive participation within the process."

From different interviews and conversations with women it is possible to see their participation in the liberation movement. Maria Antonieta (7), one of the founding members of the women's organization in Esteli, gave us the following

account:

"AMPRONAC was formed here at the end of 1977 when a group of compañeras saw with interest the formation of AMPRONAC in Managua two months before (September) as a result of the growth of the Comité de Madres de Reos Políticos (Mothers of Political Prisoners' Committee). We had been very concerned about the terrible repression in Esteli and invited one of the women's leaders from Managua to come and give us guidance. AMPRONAC-Esteli, then, was formed with some 30 women, all committed to carrying on with denunciations, raising consciousness and organizative tasks. A few weeks later, our organization had grown remarkably.....housewives, female students, female tobacco workers, etc. women from all sectors, were enthusiastic in becoming organized; we formed different teams and, in coordination with other groups, displayed our propaganda throughout the city. AMPRONAC worked very closely with the student organizations as well as with the Parents' Association. Many mothers supported and participated in their sons' activities."

"Between February and September 1978, the organized women (la mujer organizada) intensively denounced, agitated and organized.....we made huge efforts to form the CDCs which Jose Benito Escobar began to promote before his death and we helped to make leaflets about first aid, grain storage, sewing (roji negra) flags (the red and black colours of the Sandinistas), giving first aid training, etc.....we were preparing women and the population in general for a war which was coming....."

Doña Petronila (8), a well-known woman from El Calvario, said:

"Our barrio had always been the most active [she seemed very proud]; my family and I have worked for the Frente for a long time.....women here were better organized than in other barrios and perhaps we can say that this barrio was nearly always the first in everything....the Christian cursillos and the barrio committees originated in this place.....During the insurrections the comandos (headquarters) of the muchachos were based here, and the guard was always afraid of coming in. We were steadfast in helping the guerrillas. You know, when people gathered, we used to talk about the muchachos, of what real Christians they were because they were sacrificing their lives for us. All agreed it was a commitment supporting them."

"We collected money, food and organized first aid boxes in each block for assisting the injured and the ill as mothers, we thought if our sons come back, who will cook for them? Thus we were resolved to stay to work hard and be ready for them at any moment.....in this barrio, doors were open during the night until the small hours of the morning for the muchachos. So, if they were pursued, they could enter any house and escape through the solares [back yard], because these were connected with other solares. We were very organized, when the guard was searching for the muchachos in a street or in a house, they were already at the other side of the block.....they disappeared in front of the guard's eyes.....".

How the CDCs were organized

Interviewing several persons who were members (4, 10, 23) of the highest bodies of the CDCs at city level, we obtained the following information:

"I was organizing in El Calvario, the place where perhaps repression was harsher....On the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro the barrio committees were organized in the city; besides looking for social-economic improvements, we were mainly guiding them towards the role of defence for the civilian population. Hence, these committees were shortly after named the CDCs."

"For the first strike in February 1978, the one promoted by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, people stopped working but not from pursuing their own interests (no hacerles el juego). We had our own criteria and reasons: we aimed to take advantage of the strike for strengthening our power through organizing and popular mobilization. The general pattern for organizing the base organizations was: from each side of a block, there would be one person responsible for watching his side [detecting who were somocistas, the movements they made, whether the guards were coming there, etc.]. They formed the block's committee (i.e. the block's CDC]; from each four blocks, the zone's CDC was formed (see 4)."

"Each four zones constituted one sector [in Esteli there were 35 sectors] and, in turn, they elected a representative to the Central Committee which gave the direction to the city's CDCs. This structure was highly effective because mobilization was incredible. You see, if a compañero was captured, or, for instance, when Vladimir Hidalgo [a worker] was killed, within one house the whole town was informed and organized in groups prepared to

march against the local authorities....we did not need to come to each house; we were all ready and waiting and any news was passed in such a way that the responsible person of a sector communicated with the appropriate blocks and within a short space of time the barrios and the town knew what step to follow. Our communication was interesting. We used the solares and made openings among them in such a way that those responsible did not need to go outside and make obvious their meetings. Communication between blocks was also quick. We sent children with messages to the person in charge, and from there we were guaranteed that information would reach a block (23)."

An informant, who was a member of the Central Committee of the CDC's, gave us more details about them:

"The members of the CDC's formed different working teams to distribute tasks, incorporating in this way, more people into the activities. I was responsible mainly for first-aid. We received general courses with the collaboration of doctors keen on helping us; in turn we had to train our compañeros and they trained others. These courses included how to make portable stretchers (camillas), different kinds of bandages using common materials, how to carry injured people, how to temporarily set fractures, different types of fractures and so on. On the other hand, we had to select the best locations for our secret store-rooms which were to store not only grains and food but medicines, propaganda materials, weapons and so forth.....This information was known only by the members responsible for them."

"The CDC's were coordinated with all the organizations in Esteli in participating in actividades relámpagos (impromptu activities), like meetings, sociodramas, songs, etc. which lasted a few minutes. You know, it was dangerous to remain in one place for a long time, guards came capturing or killing you. We had to create new ways of agitation because it was urgent to raise the people's consciousness." (10).

Comments

The worsening economic and political conditions in Nicaragua during 1977-78 led to a marked increase in confrontations between FSLN and the National Guard. National events such as the FSLN(i) attacks in October 1977 and the assassination

of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro intertwined with local happenings (such as the assassination of Wilfredo Valenzuela, and the killings of José Benito Escobar and Vladimir Nidalgo) to generate increased interest in group mobilization.

Organization, then, emerged as a major need of the people of Esteli. There was a need for shaping and canalising mass discontent. Repression by local somocista elements - who represented the "authorities" - was reflected at all levels: in the work centres, by the sacking of employees and the killing of union leaders; in the schools, by restricting teachers from referring to the current political situation, and awarding student leaders low marks (see 21); and among the general population, by reprisals against sandinista sympathizers. It is interesting to see how different social groups in Esteli (the women, youth and adult men) converged in a common front and common purpose. It was an implicit desire for change; nevertheless, as one informant put it, "sometimes people did not take up radical or decisive attitudes, perhaps because of fear, not because of a lack of understanding the issues". There were groups which, although aiming at change, did not know the means by which to materialize their desire. It is in this context that the Christian cursillos played an important role, gradually motivating sympathizers towards more concrete actions. On the other hand, individual fear was also an expression of insecurity itself: to face the enemy alone and without the means by which to confront the repression was not the same as doing it collectively with the political support and military protection of an organization at the lead.

The absence of forces other than the FSLN with the necessary political and military strength to combat the National Guard, drove people to see it as the only viable political alternative and as the only organisation that could lead to a process of structural change. Therefore, the FSLN appeared to many individuals as a symbol for transforming reality, and one which did not conflict with their religious ideology or populist aspirations.

Within the anti-dictatorial front, strong horizontal relationships among individuals from different social groups emerged, thus overriding divisions existing because of possible conflicting class interests. Thus, as was shown in the case material, persons of different social status (workers, students and middle class professionals) collaborated in the struggle, and various organizations such as the Church, trade unions, and parent-teacher associations involved themselves in supporting the FSLN by creating a grassroots organization (the CDC's) which assisted in mobilizing people and later, serving the guerrilla army.

During 1978 there was an intense interchange of experiences in Esteli: the realization that distinct ways of life - the montaña and city - were but part of one reality; the uniting of strikingly different social groups - the revolutionary workers, the anti-somocista middle class, the university students, and the peasants - the coordination among different revolutionary actions (the FSLN(i) and FSLN-GPP); the interplay of different ideologies - Sandinista and Christian; the learning of different methods of operating legal and clandestine; the developing solidarity among the population with

the muchachos. All these facts contributed to an irreversible commitment to the struggle to overthrow the regime.

The high dynamic of events drove the people of Esteli to organize themselves in unique ways broadening their political perspectives. The comités de barrio departed from their formal goals upon which they were originally built (i.e. comunality development-projects) and instead became organised around the task of defending the local barrio population. Many of the participants of these committees became members of the CDC's and began to work with different methods. The CDC's had a clandestine character and a more specific structure (based on blocks, zones, sectors and a Central Committee). Their task was essentially to support and link up with the organizations, such as FER, AMPRONAC, COR's, and their members undertook political and military work (e.g. writing and printing documents, organized medical training etc.) oriented towards the preparation of the population in emergency circumstances.

b. The insurrection

Uprisings in Esteli occurred on three occasions: September 1978, and April and June 1979. Some of the people's accounts of the three events will be given, together with some stories illustrating parts of these to keep the dynamic of the whole period and to highlight particular aspects.

Soon after the seizure of the National Palace by the FSLN(i) on the 22nd of August 1978, and the general strike that followed it, the first insurrection at a national level

took place. This was precipitated by a series of happenings which occurred during the year throughout the country, such as the assassination of political leaders, Monimbo's insurrection in February, an out-burst of strikes, generalized protests, and armed harassment by the FSLN all over the territory. Matagalpa was the first city to show signs of uprising on the 26th of August. However, fights, building of barricades, and armed clashes appeared similarly in barrios of the main cities of Managua, Chinandega, Leon, Masaya, Diriamba, and in other towns.

Esteli

According to Pedro (1), shortly before the insurrection there,

"....we were restless, with each meeting we had [i.e. the CDC's Central Committee] our restlessness grew; we had control over nearly everything; we controlled, for instance, infiltration [into the CDCs]. All of the Central Committee members had a secret emblem, a coloured button, as we were many (about 40) and needed strict control. We had settled and organized the staple grain storage for each sector; we had people trained in first-aid, we knew the city well; we had planned where to make barricades, we were more or less prepared....".

Doña Maria describes the night if all happened,

"At midnight on the 9th of September, everybody was knocking on doors saying that the muchachos had entered....Yes, people were knocking and saying: wake up, wake up, the muchachos are here! And then, everybody got up, opened the botiquines (first-aid boxes), started preparing food and coffee,.....all the pueblo got up and started digging up adoquines (paving stones) to build the barricades, men, chavalos, women, everybody was helping. We had [referring to the sector] our grain store ready. It was full of beans, maize, cooking oil, oats, and barley, etc.....full of everything!..... everybody had responded by giving money to buy food, even gente de dinero [the better-off individuals] had contributed with money to buy our food. Here we had no hunger."

"The muchachos could not take over the city completely but almost totally controlled it. The muchachos compas [referring to armed and trained members of the FSLN] that entered the city were few, most of them were students..... but we, the people, participated and were in the majority. The people living in the centre had left, leaving overall the people from the barrios."

"The worst bombing days were around the 14th to the 18th....during those days we felt dispirited; you see, we could see that the guard was fixed on exterminating us....When the muchachos retreated from the city around the 22nd, the Operación Limpieza (cleaning up operation) began. It was horrible, the guard was killing hundreds of people."

For the April uprising, she related that,

"..the muchachos came on Palm Sunday, the 8th of April...we had already been warned.... There were less days of combat than in September; but we were in despair, the noise of the bombs left us nearly deaf.....We, the women, were looking how to help the muchachos. We gave them fresh food, sips of coffee, anything to keep them going. But there were many guards everywhere and more came from Managua, so the muchachos had to retreat. That was Good Friday, the 13th....we were impressed to see the number of guards that came..... there were thousands spread in every corner. When the muchachos decided to retreat, we had not enough arms, the bombing had again been terrible, the "Shermans" (tanks) had caused a lot of destruction, many people had died. We could not continue like that....."

"La retirada [retreat] was amazing..... the muchachos started the retreat in the afternoon and were followed by thousands of people including children, old people, women, men, whole families.... why?, because we knew that after the muchachos were gone, we would have the cleaning-up operation again. We knew then what it was like. So, many people decided to follow the muchachos. They did not want to remain here; they did not want to die here at the hands of the genocida. The next day, the guard's chief said: 'the sandinistas must be witches (brujos), because who knows how they managed to get out of the city....' You know, the muchachos and the immense lines of people after them, were able to withdraw amid thousands, but thousands, of guards everywhere.....

"Next day, the 14th, the guard came with relish to clean up. They machine gunned the houses....it

was horrible.....I stayed in the town all the time until our liberation in July.....". (9)

Don Chepe, a trader of the town, said,

"I was in the CDCs. We prepared the population for the war.....for September, we had few armas patentes [referring to powerful arms like automatic guns]. We had to back the muchachos morally by building the barricades, feeding them, bringing messages, giving information etc., because it was a people's war.....I think we could have won and liberated Esteli, but the other cities could not sustain the battle long enough and therefore, when we were still fighting, Somoza sent here all the aeroplanes, 'Shermans', helicopters, everything to execute us....so, when the muchachos saw all that amount of weaponry concentrated here, they decided to retreat. I remained here; I have a smallholder farm in this municipality and I go there regularly.. thus, I helped my sons and other compañeros, about 15, by lodging them there. We worked in that little house; we gave the guerrillas food when they came in and stored anything they asked us."

"For the April insurrection I travelled often to my smallholding, acting as a go-between for the muchachos; I carried messages for them hidden in my underpants held with a pin, or here, inside my faja [belt]."

"Before April we had un engaño [a spy operation] carried out by the so-called 'Cherry'. He had been working with the guerrillas but then went over to the guard. He knew nearly all the campamentos and had many contacts. He told everything and as a result many, yes many, people died. We had to warn everybody that "el Cherry" was an oreja [a traitor]. The news of him even reached Honduras. He was killed after the final uprising."

"The insurrection in April lasted about five days. I had gone to the market and on coming back heard the gunfire. The muchachos were here. There were guards everywhere. I heard a clash near my smallholding. I thought of my sons and the muchachos. I thought they had died and thus, I thought if they have died fighting for freedom, why should I not die fighting as well.....I asked my wife to leave the city and go to any other safe place, but she replied, 'If I go, if we go, then who will care for the muchachos?.....that encouraged me and I tried to keep calm....."

"Days passed, fierce fighting....we were in despair and felt discouraged because we expected other cities to rise-up....but we had been the only one....so the army had concentrated here. When the muchachos saw

the situation they decided to retreat....I told them it was not fair while we were fighting and people dying, others, in the country, were enjoying Holy Week....We felt frustrated....Nevertheless, days after la retirada [the retreat]. we heard through Radio Sandino [Sandinista Radio] that in other regions people were fighting and a lot of ambushes of the guard were taking place all over the territory....our morale rose and then we recovered strength again. A communique from the Frente stated that the next move would be the decisive, the definitive fight; the muchachos were preparing themselves again. We saw that they had better arms, and just looking at their enthusiasm and confidence, that gave us great courage....."

"More people went away from the city. The end of May came and we felt eager to finish with the enemy at once. The expected day came! I was here well-armed checking the barricades all over, bringing and taking messages, food, information, you know, getting everything ready for the final batter....Thus, the last war was just one thing; the people against the enemy - the guard..... The people who stayed were to help and fight together with the muchachos; that was the only choice for those who decided to remain. The muchachos came from everywhere, some were already here, better prepared than previously. The guard was discouraged, they knew they had no support from anyone in this town, the guerra psicológica [psychological war] was effective. They felt demoralized....while we were full of hope, of trust, of valour....The bombing and attacks started; it was a totally well-defined war: the Frente against the Genocida....The latter were uncontrolled, in chaos. When we saw the planes, the tanks, the helicopters, the "supersónicos" coming we could see that they were failing when shooting; they were not effective any more. By then we knew the movements of these machines and hence, knew where and how to avoid their actions. We fought for nearly 40 days, the city which resisted the most. The city was in the hands of the muchachos, the guard was concentrated in its headquarters. If they wanted to hurt us it had to be by air bombing or by shooting los morteros from their headquarters. On the 15th of July it was planned to seize the headquarters but we failed, so it was moved to the next day. All night we kept fighting....At the hours of dawn (madrugada) an aircraft organised by the muchachos to bomb the headquarters, appeared, but the two rockets which it fired it just the headquarter's tower, so it failed because the idea was to provoke enough damage to make the guards come out and face us outside. We were waiting for them.... About 11.0 a.m. the muchachos were to give them half an hour to surrender. They had prepared a tractor with

a switched-on engine which was to run in the direction of the headquarter's wall to knock it down which would be followed by combatants to fight the guard. The guard did not surrender. The muchachos let the tractor go and when the guards heard the noise of the tractor coming they thought it was full of bombs and started running away. The muchachos defeated them. The chief commander, Vicente Zuñiga, called "La Sombra" attempted to escape finding refuge in the village called Los Ninos [a place where orphaned children live] but the compas were already waiting for him....When we all heard that Zuñiga had died....we launched into the streets with joy. We went to the garrison and saw piles of rifles, food, weapons, etc. They had everything to live for months. That is why we said that in spite of the guards' military resources, we could defeat them because we had courage and were all united...."

Manuel (5), a student, gave an account of his participation in the uprisings:

"Before the September insurrection I had gone to the montaña. For the first insurrection, between mid-night and dawn 21 compañeros entered Esteli. The first places we took over were the barrios El Calvario and Oscar Gamez..... We had nearly total control over the city, and the guard concentrated in the comando. However, as we were gaining control, the other insurrected cities could not resist the genocida's attacks and they were in disarray....thus, the genocida army began to concentrate their actions on Esteli. We did not have enough weapons to arm the people and so we decided to retreat. We fought intensively for 13 days...."

"We retreated but we could not say that it was a defeat because we had achieved our aims basically: to wear down the guard, to increase the people's combative experience and to strengthen our organization....From the 21 compañeros who came into the city, hundreds joined them, taking up arms. Politically the people had been won over, but we still lacked sufficient military power....Thus, after the insurrection, part of las masas (the masses) who had participated, began to prepare themselves clandestinely for political and military action. There was a scarcity of weapons capable of facing a war; most of the people had only hunting arms and that helped little. So we had to capture more arms from the guard by means of ambushes, harrassments, military action.....These actions also served as a military training. The people who joined the guerrillas had to carry on



the revolutionary task of concientization among the peasants. We needed to expand and consolidate our network of collaborators and linked it with the city; this was a fundamental commitment. It was a struggle in which both countryside and city were directly involved. Hence, the Frente had to focus on this aspect."

"Between September and April we analysed which the specific tasks we needed to carry out; we analysed which individuals could still work legally in the city and planned to send them back; it was necessary to reorganize the orientate urban organization for coordinating our actions. You know, the surroundings of Esteli was saturated by escuadras de combatientes and therefore we needed urban-montaña contact and support...."

Alberto (15) another student, told us:

"After the September uprising I went to the montaña with lots of compañeros. The guerrilla movement expanded and we recovered arms from the guard. In December we saw the need to reinforce and reorganize again the urban structure. So, the 'Tupamaro group' was formed with the purpose of investigating and carrying out actions to undermine the guard. They undertook ambushes, raids on Banks, and extended the military training among the urban population. Students, women, workers, were given training in houses, school buildings, any place camuflacheado [camouflaged]...here in the montaña, we also provided military training, political preparation and basic knowledge of guerrilla tactics."

"For April, the guerrilla column 'Filemon Rivera' entered the city. Other battles took place around the city, such as in Condega with the Facundo Picado column and in the villages nearby; nevertheless, it was only in Esteli where the actual population fought. The Frente had planned to carry on coordinated actions throughout the country.... it had been planned to harrass Esteli just for a few days and then to retreat, but once we were here...the people mobilized los compas and asked us to stay and to protect them....Nonetheless, los compas had to retreat. It had been the only city that rose up and again, the guard had concentrated here. We suffered great losses, such as the compañero Juan Alberto Blandón who was the chief (jefe) of the guerrilla column, and other compañeros. We decided to pull back....the people were crying, begging us not to go, but we had to. The guard were surrounding us."

"How we organized La retirada: the guard held us in two military rings; one around the city, and the other covering the outside areas including diverse roads and tracks leading to the mountains and nearby villages. There were about 2,500 well armed guards....se cantó la retirada [they called the retreat] and the Vanguard - the FSLN - organized its best armed and military combatants going at the head, there went about 130-140 compañeros....but the most striking thing was that a crowd of more than 3,000 persons was also preparing to follow us. You could see young people, old persons with bordón (sticks), children, women, chickens, dogs, people carrying small belongings, with small carts. We had a great responsibility. We were astonished but had to find a solution amid these difficulties...."

Pepe (17) another guerrilla fighter, told us:

"It was about 6.30 p.m., the people decided to follow us, they knew what the Operación Limpieza was. We had the responsibility to take them with us out of the city. We started walking....in silence crossing El Calvario, Alfredo Lazo, in the direction to El Limon [South West from Esteli]....about 3 to 4 hours later we had broken the first ring [surrounding the city]; the guard thought we would continue towards El Limon, but, instead, we turned towards La Quebrada looking towards the Panamerican Road..the guard did not shoot at us because they thought the people were well armed when they saw the first combatants carrying the fales [automatic rifles]... we crossed the Panamerican Road and walked towards La Quiatilla in the South East....burlamos a la guardia! [we fooled the guards!]....They thought we would continue towards the South West, but we turned to the South East around the Cerro Tomabus.. We took two nights to reach the Cerro...then, because of the large number of people, we formed another column called Juan Alberto Blandón. We had carried with us the injured as well. We talked to the people, explaining the whole situation to them; no food, injured, old people, children, not enough arms, the danger of armed clashes. The injured were to remain in the Filemon Rivera's column and part of the people decided to return or stayed in nearby villages. The injured were shortly afterwards located in places for medical attention. We continued in el monte (the hills) all April and May, harrassing the guard in areas of Esteli and Jinotega. We received food from the peasants."

Don Guayo (4) described how:

"...after La retirada, very few people stayed in the city [about 350 families only], I did. There was not too much to do, we had had two experiences and knew how to behave before the enemy. Following the retreat each cuadra (block) spontaneously organised to sweep away the rubble and to generally clean up the streets. We knew how to organize ourselves, we knew how to wait for the final battle."

Don Juan (3) gave us a fuller picture of the difficulties faced by those who remained in the city:

"In April, we did not expect the harrassment to last long....we were not fully prepared. Those were hard days, water ran out from the first day, then electricity and food began to be scarce. However, a number of people had foreseen the need to have emergency supplies of food and we all shared it."

"Those who remained in the city had to work under extremely difficult conditions. Our work then consisted of collecting clandestine funds to send to los muchachos in the montañas through messengers. Just about 10% of the population stayed; the streets were lonely, dark and silent. However, we continued to do our best. We improved our knowledge of clandestine work and all those who stayed in the town cooperated indeed."

"Between April and June, the houses of seguridad were still functioning. These were to play an important role; los muchachos used to come, work on maps, teach us personal defence and plan the final war...By the end of May, more people had left the city, we were then just about 5%. On the 9th of June, los muchachos returned with more people to help build the barricades. It was a feeling of emotion, of excitement, each one brought their own gun, 20-30....and our houses were left open to facilitate the passage of los muchachos through the solares and cuadras."

"I had to leave the city because I had three sons and one is handicapped. All together, with my wife and niece, we left about 5.0 a.m. and took shelter in a nearby farm."

"While staying in the farm, I used to often visit the city. I did not mind risking my life; I used to make cuajada (cheese), prepare tortillas, elotes (corn cobs), hornados (bread), cigarretes and bring them to los muchachos; many people did

the same. We spent all days like that, supporting the Frente, carrying messages, feeding them, up until the 16th of July when the seizure of the comando took place.

Orlando (1) formerly a tailor and now holding a high rank in the Army, explained:

"Esteli achieved its victory fighting together with its own people; each place, each town, each village recruited fighters and also sent men to serve in other fronts, such as the South Front, Benjamin Zeledon. Our front was the North Front, Carlos Fonseca Amador.... The participation of women was fundamental. They played a central role indeed. Women were present both among the military columns as well as in the urban areas preparing and backing the insurrections. Several times women showed more courage than men combatants; women displayed valour in armed confrontation and were brave enough for any task and responsibility. The Frente assigned young women to right in the first lines just as any male combatant. Our shared experience when we lived in el monte, and our close collaboration here in the city, was of great value; we learned a great deal from the character of women, and we discovered many aspects previously we had ignored...

Maria Antonieta (11) made some additional points about the insurrectional period:

"After the September insurrection, many people went underground and the structures of the Frente in the city weakened with their absence. Later on, however, when some compañeros returned we began working hard again. It was lucky that many of the guards in Esteli were replaced by new ones who did not know our faces well; it was an advantage!"

"During the insurrections, but overall in the first and second ones, we saw soldiers from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and even from Vietnam. We could distinguish them by their way of talking and because they carried foreign cigarettes and had foreign currency. Repression was very hard that even young mothers decided to retire from the city and went to the monte. Many of them returned to the city later and helped with rebuilding the infraestructura (infrastructure) of the Frente. Nevertheless, after the April insurrection, women devoted themselves fully to the guerrilla struggle;

a lot of young couples became completely involved in the armed fight and some left their children under their parents' care."

"The commercial activities of the city were nearly paralysed after the September insurrection; a great deal of the merchants left Esteli, leaving only those with small shops and pulperias (very small corner shops and stalls). The city looked lonely and quiet: we were practically in a state of siege. At the end of May, the South Front started fighting, followed by Leon, Matagalpa and Esteli. By the 9th of June, the date when the Frente commenced battle here once again, there was already a general strike throughout the whole country....In Esteli all the people fought. We were the most resistant city against the genocida action."

Demoralization among the National Guard

An agriculturist, Samuel (12) stressed the growing pessimism of the guard:

"The guard was always afraid of us. They knew that the whole of Esteli was pro-Frente. They were forced to fight against us, they were (desmoralizada) demoralized. During the September insurrection the guard had a shock when they saw the widespread support which the Frente had. They were surprised by how the whole city was participating in every task.. they felt alone."

"One night, during the Operación Limpieza of September, the guard came searching my house. I told them: come in, we are just an honest family cooking our beans: some of them were nervous, looking angry and aggressive. A guardia approached me and said to the others: leave them, I know this man....and went away. At that time I did not recognise that man. His face was swollen twice as normal. Nevertheless, a few days later I met him again in the road and he said: now, can you recognise me this time? and I said, yes, I think I have given you some raids ['rides', a Nicaraguan expression for lifts] in my car before. 'Yes', the guardia said. 'But the other night when we came to your house you did not recognise me, did you not?' Well, actually I did not, I replied. 'You know', said the guard, 'we do not know what we eat or what we drink, who knows with what they - the guards' authorities -

feed us that we get swollen'."

The psychological pressure experienced by the guard was also referred to by Samuel (12):

"You know, the guards were always drunk and they used to tell people that their water bottles were filled of trago [alcohol], and they carried tranquilizers (calmantes). If they refused to take these, then drugs were mixed in their food. That is why we think the guard felt discouraged: they also had to face the people's hatred for the dictatorship and the National Guard. Demoralization among the guard was important for us [referring to the Frente]. We knew about their isolation and several times se rajaron [they backed down]....so we took advantage of this factor."

"One day, when I enrolled in the guerrilla army, I was sitting at the bottom of a hill waiting for another compa ero who had gone to search the area nearby, had my gun in my hands, when suddenly....about ten guards appeared coming towards me. I rapidly threw myself on the ground pointing my gun at them, ready to fire. Do you know what happened.... los hijue de putas [the sons of bitches] came walking in front of me and passed by quietly; they carried their guns in their left hands without any intention of fighting...se hicieron los locos [i.e. appearing stupid]. They perhaps thought we were hundredssurrounding them and with their attitude of doing nothing were saying: let us go, we do not wish to fight."

"During the final insurrection the guard was obviously demoralized. They had seen that in Esteli they had no support at all and thus on many occasions they ran away when seeing the muchachos wearing the roji-negra handkerchieves."

Manuel explained the contribution of children to the demoralization of the guard:

"The psychological factor was very important in our victory. We knew the guard feared us and we had to increase such fear in order to break them. For instance, during the uprising los chavalos [schoolchildren] used to burn triquitracas [home-made rockets] in front of amplifiers so as to scare the guard. Of course at the beginning such a noise would frighten

everyone, but soon we learnt that it was to frighten the enemy. Many times, the guard ran away when they heard the sound."

Comments

The uprisings in Esteli were the outcome of a generalized growing dissatisfaction deriving from both local and extra-local events. As we observed earlier, local happenings such as the assassination of a boy (Wilfredo Valenzuela) and the continual arrests and killings of individuals from different social groups (e.g. Vladimir Hidalgo from the working class and the daughter and son of Don Felipe (27)) increased common understanding between the different social strata. These local occurrences, combined with national developments, such as the assassination at the beginning of 1978 of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, a known member of the Conservative Party, who came from a wealthy family. This had the effect of bringing together for reasons of security groups that might otherwise have been opposed.

Another important factor was the failure of the attempts made by groups of the bourgeoisie opposed to the regime to negotiate a peaceful and stable solution. The result of their efforts was always a harshening of repressive measures, leading to the development of a broad coalition between the various social groups, bringing together both the more conservative and radical elements.

The uprisings intensified the existing interaction between and among social groups giving individuals new perspectives on their life situation. For example (as Don Juan, Alberto and

Pepe emphasized) rural and urban elements became more closer integrated in the effort to support the guerrilla army. There was an interchange of experiences between peasants and urban dwellers giving a broader understanding of each others social reality. The same was true of the relationship between men and women, between Christians and non-Christians, and between the better-off and lower income social categories.

The liberation war also introduced new forms of expression reflected in use of a new vocabulary of an explicit military and political character. For example, we find that most people were familiar with the names of weaponry (e.g. fales, Shermans, bomba de contacto) and a specialized set of terms was developed associated with various activities entailed by the military and political struggle (e.g. casa de seguridad, buzones, infraestructura política, frente de combate). They also acquired a more elaborated political vocabulary when describing the existing social order and conditions and when characterising the types of social change they were fighting. For example, the terms compañero and hermano became generalized to all those supporting the struggle and those against were classified as contra-revolucionario or somocista. They also emphasized the anti-imperialista nature of the war and distinguished between la burguesía somocista and la burguesía de oposición or burguesía criolla that had accepted the necessity of some change in Nicaraguan society, getting rid of the Somoza ruling group but not (except for a few exceptions) participating directly in the struggle. It is important to stress that this vocabu-

lary emerged out of direct personal experience and by means of the conscientization process conducted by the political cadres that spread the liberation ideology among the organized sectors (i.e. trade unions, student and women organizations and the CDCs).

The changes experienced by individuals and groups during the liberation period laid the foundations for the process of social adaptation in the post-liberation situation. As I have tried to show, these changes were both behavioural and ideological. The next chapter focuses on the social and economic problems of the post-liberation phase, describing the various forms of social and political participation that developed.

Chapter IV

Participation of the People of Esteli in the Process of Social Reconstruction

Nicaragua after the Sandinista Triumph

This chapter provides an account of the main events which followed Somoza's departure from Nicaragua, stressing the particular efforts and changes carried out by the new government, commonly called the JGRN - Junta de Gobierno de Reconstruccion Nacional. The new government is attempting to build a new society with new perspectives while still struggling against economic dependence and political forces adverse to the anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and popular ideology of the FSLN. The main aim of the chapter, then, is to analyse the economic and political implications of the Sandinista government after little more than a year in power. I will also discuss the role played by mass organizations in Esteli in rebuilding the city.

Reconstructing the Nation and the city, much of which was in ruins, constitutes a hard and long-term task that needs each individual's understanding of the manifold social and physical problems and his or her active participation in all aspects of the reconstruction. In continuing the methodology used for an inside view of Esteli, I make use of people's perceptions of their town's condition and their expectations of life now, under different demands, which are in no way easier than previously. The situation represented a new set of difficulties and the number of variables entering into play were numerous and varied. At the time of fieldwork, the people of Esteli showed a particular grasp of the country's actual

conditions as well as the problems faced by their city. Individuals still had to confront urgent local economic problems which affected popular participation and required considerable assistance from the central government.

1. General background of the country after the Liberation War

On the 19th of July, the FSLN troops assembled in Managua, welcomed by all the Nicaraguan people; everybody was joyful, shouting slogans of victory, raising up roji-negra flags; friends and parents looked for their compañeros and sons among the crowds, and thousands of groups gathered to celebrate their happiness with songs of triumph. The anthem of the FSLN could be loudly heard and an ambience of freedom was in the air.

Nonetheless, amid the general celebrations, people in Managua, Esteli and the other liberated cities were also concerned with where and how to start picking up all the threads to take the country forward. A new challenge had been imposed on the new leaders and on the suffering yet victorious people: to reconstruct their society in the face of deep structural hindrances and newly derived political and economic contradictions resulting from recent developments.

The new JGRN

The new Junta had to face the problems presented by a devastated country and an economy left in total bankruptcy. The JGRN had been formed weeks before the July triumph, by the need to represent the broad mass of people who had rebelled against the dictatorial regime. The new JGRN was composed of elements representing the diverse sectors who participated in

overthrowing Somoza's regime and, despite the FSLN's role in directing the liberation movement, they recognised the participation of members of the anti-somocista bourgeoisie and gave them a place within the new administration. The Junta was made up of two Sandinista professionals, a member of the National Directorate of the FSLN, and two figures from the bourgeoisie, Violeta v. de Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo, both known for their political roles in the PCD and MDN respectively. These last two persons resigned their offices between March and April of 1980 and were replaced by other leading professionals from among the bourgeoisie. The resignations, however, particularly that of the industrialist, Alfonso Robelo, were due to their incompatibility with the Sandinista members who maintained a revolutionary position centered on promoting socialist policies, and Robelo's rigid position which represented the most conservative view of the dominant economic groups of the country.

Private enterprise centred around COSEP (Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada) and the most conservative factions felt their economic interests were being undermined and complained that they had been relegated to second place for political reasons. They wanted higher economic assistance and the preferential support of State policies in aiding small producers, small entrepreneurs and the working class population in general. However, the FSLN maintained its representation in the JGRN and, together with organizations like the PSN, PLI and Christian organizations, had managed by December 1979 to set up institutions to further the interests of the poorer sectors: hence Ministries of Social Welfare, Agrarian Reform, Planning and

Education were established.

During the first year, the JGRN carried out important changes at all levels of the State institutions, passed important decrees concerning National property, made revisions of the tax system, elaborated an agrarian reform policy, nationalized the financial system and enacted a series of regulations producing substantial modifications in the social relations of production in the country. As most of the changes were intended to relieve exploitation and to benefit the masses, it is not surprising that many groups from private enterprises were discontented and gradually organized a series of actions to hinder State operations which, according to the bourgeoisie, affected their accustomed profits.

The inherited economic bankruptcy

When the new JGRN took office, the country faced major economic problems due to the accumulation of external debts contracted by Somoza which had gone to increase his own fortune and favour his private business as well as to enrich relatives and friends. The burden of external debt left by Somoza had been made heavier by a series of international loans received in the final years of his regime in order to purchase weapons for fighting the revolutionaries. By the middle of 1979, the external debt had reached US \$ 1,530 million (see Datos Básicos Sobre Nicaragua, 1980 : 30) and represented much more than the annual PIB of the country for 1979, which was only US \$ 1,299 million (see Ibid. : 13). In addition, there were US \$ 700 million owing in interests and expiring credits which were scheduled for repayment at the end of 1979 (see Gilly, A., 1979).

This also represented much more than the total amount of foreign currency received from the country's export products for 1979 which amounted to US \$ 598 million (Datos Básicos, 1980 : 27).

To the external debt one must add all the financial aid the country now needed for reconstruction and to start running enterprises destroyed or partially destroyed by the war. The country's capacity for production in the field of industry and agriculture decreased catastrophically for the year 1979. According to the report on Nicaragua by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, production levels had fallen to those of 1962 (see Black, G., 1981 : 200) and the flight of capital before the victory had also been large. When the JGRN started work it found just US \$ 3.5 million in the country's reserves, Somoza having sacked all he could before his departure. Thus, faced with this scene, the government, together with the National Directorate of the FSLN agreed to set up an Economic Programme of Reactivation, whose purpose was to reactivate the existing productive enterprises in parallel to preparing the grounds for a future transformation in the economic system. This programme proposed a progressive economic recovery that hoped to reach in 1980 the production levels of 1978, and in 1981 the levels of 1977, as this was considered as a "normal" year (see Programa de Reactivación Económica 1980 : 17).

Reacomodation of the political forces

The composition of the JGRN was a reflection of the economic and political reality of the country, firstly because the presence of bourgeois elements in it was a recognition of their participation during the anti-dictatorial movement, and

secondly because, despite nationalization of some enterprises and the confiscation of Somoza's properties, the bourgeoisie still controlled important sectors of the economy and because of this had certain political influence especially among the petty bourgeois groups who in their turn still heavily controlled the country's commercial and supply network. Private enterprise also dominated the main means of communication (e.g. press and broadcasting). Thus, the bourgeois groups and private entrepreneurial sector could to some extent exercise influence among the middle class population, providing one of the existing contradictions in the political framework where political hegemony was headed by an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and popular organization.

Although the FSLN represented the major political force and its positions were the most influential of the State apparatus, the State's economic capacity was not yet able to control the main productive sectors on which the country's economy was based, i.e. agro-export production. According to a report of one of the Junta's members, Sergio Ramirez to the CEPAL in October 1979, approximately 55% of the arable land had come under State control; however, with regard to production, the State only controlled 15% of coffee cultivation, 13.3% of cotton, 30% of sugar cane production and 12% of cattle raising (Datos Básicos, 1980 : 23), which meant that most of the main agricultural export capacity was still in private hands. Moreover, the new State-owned resources were in worse shape than those of the bourgeoisie, given that Somoza's firms had been run by a highly corrupt administration. Thus, although politically the private business group was not dominant,

economically it had started in better condition than the State, and had taken advantage of this situation to acquire some political influence. By the time of fieldwork, the bourgeoisie and non-Sandinista private enterprise had COSEP as their representative in the State's Council, La Prensa as their main written means of communication, had some private broadcasting and had Alfonso Robelo, one of the most dynamic 'right-wing' leaders, as their spokesman.

The composition of the Council had been outlined in June 1979 when the JGRN was formed and originally included the participation of 23 organizations: FSLN; National Patriotic Front - FPN - which was made up of MPU, PLI, Los 12, PPSC, CTN, FO and the Union of Radio Journalists; the Broad Opposition Front - FAO - which was formed by the PCD, PSC, MDN, MLC, PSN, the trade unions CGT(i) and CUS; the COSEP composed of INDE, CADIN, UPANIC, CONAPRO and the Chamber of Construction; the National Autonomous University - UNAN - and the National Association of Clergy - ANCLEN (see Black, G., 1981 : 245).

However, at that time, none of the base organizations had representation in the new-born Council, in spite of their important participation during the uprising. This led to its restructuring at the end of 1979 for they could not be left aside, being of fundamental importance to the country in the reconstruction phase. While the Council was in the process of restructuring, the FSLN, together with Sandinista organizations, dedicated themselves to an intensive reorganization of grass-roots organization, taking as a point of departure the already-formed base groups which had contributed so effectively to the

liberation movement: the CDCs, AMPRONAC, ATC and the COR.

Eventually, the Council of State achieved its formal constitution on the 4th of May 1980, with the participation of the former organizations and broadened by mass organizations, other trade unions, an ethnic organization of the Atlantic Coast and the new Sandinista Armed Forces, making up around 53 seats which represented all the diverse groups. The Council's composition reflected the combination of forces of the country which included:

1. The Sandinista organizations: the FSLN, CDS (previously the CDCs), ATC, the Sandinista Workers' Federation - CST - AMNLAE (previously AMPRONAC), the Sandinista Youth - JS -, the Armed Forces - EPS -, the Revolutionary Patriotic Front - FPR - (previously the FPN) which in turn was comprised of the alliance of the PLI, PSN and PPSC. This block accounted for 27 representatives.
2. The anti-FSLN block: consisting of private enterprise, COSEP which was composed of the INDE, CADIN, CCC, CHAMBER OF CONSTRUCTION, UPANIC and CONAPRO. To this block were allied the right-wing political parties and some right-wing oriented trade unions: the PCD, PSC, MDN and the CTN and CUS, accounting for a further 17 seats.
3. The Bloc of the Independent Organizations: represented by organizations which had given support to the FSLN during the insurrection and which continued to back the revolutionary process, such as the CGT(i), CAUS (Communist Union), the National Journalists' Union - UPN -, the Health Workers' Federation - FETISALUD -, the Teachers' Union - ANDEN -, MISURASATA (comprising the Sumos, Ramas and Miskitos ethnic groups of the

Atlantic Coast), the National Association of Clergy - ANCLÉN - and the Higher Education Council - CNES -, in all making up nine representatives of the Council (see Black, G., 1981 : 246).

The present Council of State clearly shows the character of the revolutionary process; never before had the people been given the opportunity to participate in the country's decision-making, as well as to express their ideas and to criticize constructively national policies. "The Council of State is the most concrete way to demonstrate the democratic vocation, the participative essence of this process", said Sergio Ramirez at the installation of the Council (Mensaje de la JGRN, 1980 : 8), and actually this event was interpreted by the bulk of the population as a major achievement.

Formally, therefore, at the political level, the broad mass of the people had achieved a considerable degree of participation in government. This was an issue which worried some sectors of the bourgeoisie who found their influence affected. In consequence, the most reactionary groups of private enterprise started a campaign directed at creating confusion based on speculation of consumer goods, propogating fear about the "ghost of communism", making malicious criticisms and attacks on the mistakes made by the Sandinistas owing to their inexperience, distributing propaganda against Sandinista organizations and so on, with the ultimate intention of provoking political destabilization, while the government was fighting to create conditions that would favour increases in production. Politically, the bourgeoisie and private entrepreneurs were aware of their limitations: class consciousness had been

increased among the exploited and these poorer groups would protect their own interest when threatened.

Mass organizations

The establishment of a Council of State with the participation of different sectors of the people meant a victory for them, and a set-back for the bourgeoisie; the working class, the peasantry, women and youth were represented through their respective organizations: CST, ATC, AMNLAE and the JS, but overall by the CDS which, although they were not directly linked to specific areas of production, embraced practically all the organized population. Due to their broad character, the CDSs have been increasingly used to defend and control threats to the revolution, for they are found at every corner of the cities, towns, villages and countryside. The CDSs were considered as key organizations in executing government policies, in increasing participation to achieve better outcomes, as well as pursuing a role of unmasking counter-revolutionary forces which could endanger the gains already made by the present government and the FSLN.

The importance of mass organizations in the revolutionary process is fundamental, not only because they allow the people to exercise power at the level of decision-making, but also in their capacity to implement such decisions. In practice, mass organizations act like a motor generating energy and developing individuals' faculties for carrying out political and economic tasks. Moreover, these groups contribute to the promotion of and participation in the Popular Militias - MPS - another form of preparing them against enemy threats and for popular defence.

Because of all this, the reactionary groups of the bourgeoisie have centered their propaganda on discrediting such organizations, particularly the CDSs, which have proved so efficient in pointing out and denouncing the tricks private enterprise has used in order to further their own ends (e.g. the artificial scarcity of basic goods resulting from merchants having monopoly and storing them).

Mass organizations, however, have undergone a process of restructuring. Their origin and functioning before the Sandinista triumph was quite different from what it is now. There were difficulties in delineating each organization's role, especially that of the CDSs. Being the broadest based, they sometimes overlapped with others more specifically related to production centres, sex or age, but they seem gradually to have overcome these problems and have consolidated their importance, as will be seen later on in the case of Esteli.

Another characteristic of mass organizations is their capacity to mobilize the population in an ordered way, as was seen during the First National Anniversary meeting in Managua and the mobilization required by the National Literacy Crusade to educate and train people for collective responsibilities given the hard conditions of the country. The FSLN National Directorate aims, through mass organizations, to enable people to make popular power a fact, and to achieve the transformation of the State, intermediary bodies and production centres themselves. Mass organizations have, then, the role to defend the revolutionary process politically, militarily and economically.

On the other hand, though Sandinista mass organization nowadays embraces the largest part of the population, top leaders recognise the existence of internal limitations which create difficulties in accomplishing the demanding tasks of the revolution. There are, for instance, limitations corresponding to the level of the organizations' development. Not all have the same level of experience. Some organizations emerged and their cadres were trained before and during the insurrectional period, but it must be remembered that others are totally new and/or have been transformed from tiny cells - which had worked clandestinely and in response to different views - to mass organizations acting openly and on a new basis. It was after the Liberation that organizations were able to come together, aspiring to become the real vehicles for popular expression at a national level, as well as to represent the interests of specific social sectors (see Nuñez, C., 1980).

Among other hindrances mass organizations have to face are the lack of human and material resources at their disposal. Sandinista organizations have grown remarkably since the Triumph and there are neither enough cadres to organize effectively the population involved, nor sufficient resources to cover material needs which could realise people's political aspirations. Moreover, the country's poor social and economic circumstances have set constraints on organizations that are trying to hasten the satisfaction of popular aspirations. This has led to some conflicts between more politicized and less politicized members of the organizations. Nevertheless, limitations have, in turn, led to the need to work out new strategies and to convert mistakes due to experience, into useful lessons for making progress amid a complex reality.

Thus, the FSLN has focused intensively on preparing political cadres at all levels of mass organizations for confronting the actions of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, aimed at destabilizing the country economically and politically. The FSLN National Directorate is well aware of the people's lack of technical knowledge and educational levels for directing the country's development. Big efforts have therefore been made to transform and improve the quality of mass organizations in order to guarantee the successful course of the revolution (see Arce, B., 1980).

USA's policy towards Nicaragua and the bourgeoisie

It is worthwhile to mention that since the triumph of the Sandinistas, revolutionary left-wing movements in the Central American region have encouraged and have increased their actions to the extent of converting the isthmus into an arena of political struggle which worries the White House. The North Americans fear that countries which traditionally have been dominated and influenced by them may move towards other political ideologies, thereby threatening their economic and political interests. Their flexibility towards the international aid of the Nicaraguan Junta and the friendly relationship of the FSLN with socialist countries are seen by the State Department as contributing to the expansion of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist thinking over the Central American zone, especially in El Salvador and Guatemala whose revolutionary guerrillas are making gains and strengthening their popular support. In consequence, the North Americans have followed a policy aimed at isolating Nicaragua, putting pressure upon the international press to underplay the achievements of the revolution, as well

as obstructing economic aid. Furthermore, the USA have adopted a strategy of bringing together the extreme right-wing military forces of the area (e.g. Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador) to threaten armed intervention in Nicaragua using the pretext of protecting the region against "communism".

Apart from the economic and political pressure, the continual accusation of the Reagan administration that Cuba and Nicaragua are supporting the Marxist guerrillas has eroded diplomatic relationships within the Nicaraguan JGRN and reinforced the USA's links with the bourgeoisie, who in turn, have also launched a propaganda campaign against the presence of Cuban teachers and technicians, attributing to them false charges intended to create distrust among the population: "the Cubans are taking our children out for brain washing". The reactionary positions of the North Americans and of the bourgeoisie have converged to stimulate ex-Somocista guards to make armed incursions along the borders between Nicaragua and Honduras. They count on the support of the right-wing military forces of the surrounding countries, and at the same time they are financing anti-Sandinista armed gangs to carry out actions to infuse terror in the countryside.

The incapacity of the North Americans and the pro-imperialist bourgeoisie to influence to their satisfaction the decision-making of the JGRN; their incapacity to diminish sympathy among the Central American peoples for the FSLN; the fear by the dominant economic groups of losing their economic interests, and their ambition to recover political hegemony in Nicaragua; and the USA's concern for losing control over the isthmus, have led them to a closer alliance in an attempt to bring about

political and economic destabilization of the Revolution. At present, both National bourgeoisie and USA are aware of their own economic strength and the country's need for a "mixed economy"; and it is therefore in this area that they have placed their efforts to undermine the FSLN's dominant influence. Moreover, though the FSLN successfully destroyed the Somocista military which served to enforce reactionary interests, the Sandinistas and the FSLN leaders are mindful of the seriousness of the current strife, not only in defending the Revolution but also for the limitations this sets on socio-economic progress.

Esteli in the Reconstruction Process

In this section a general view is presented of how the city of Esteli was left after the Liberation War, so one can better grasp the urgent need of the population to focus on reconstruction. Reconstruction meant more than restoring buildings: the high level of destruction reduced to rubble many centres of work affecting sharply the local economy at all levels. It has been estimated that it will take several years to recover the levels of economic activity, as losses were so high.

During my stay in Esteli, though a lot had been done to restore the city, the scars of war were still very much in evidence: large empty spaces, former buildings in ruins, numerous dwellings with signs of tank shots, traces of fire, damaged roofs, windows and doors which had not yet been repaired. The damage could also be estimated through observing the new patches on walls and visible parts of buildings, besides the

lack of furniture and the state of the interiors of houses (see map III). Physically, there was no doubt about the scale of the destruction. The scope of the effects left by such destruction were even more overwhelming when the task of reconstruction was set in the light of the country's and Esteli's economic bankruptcy.

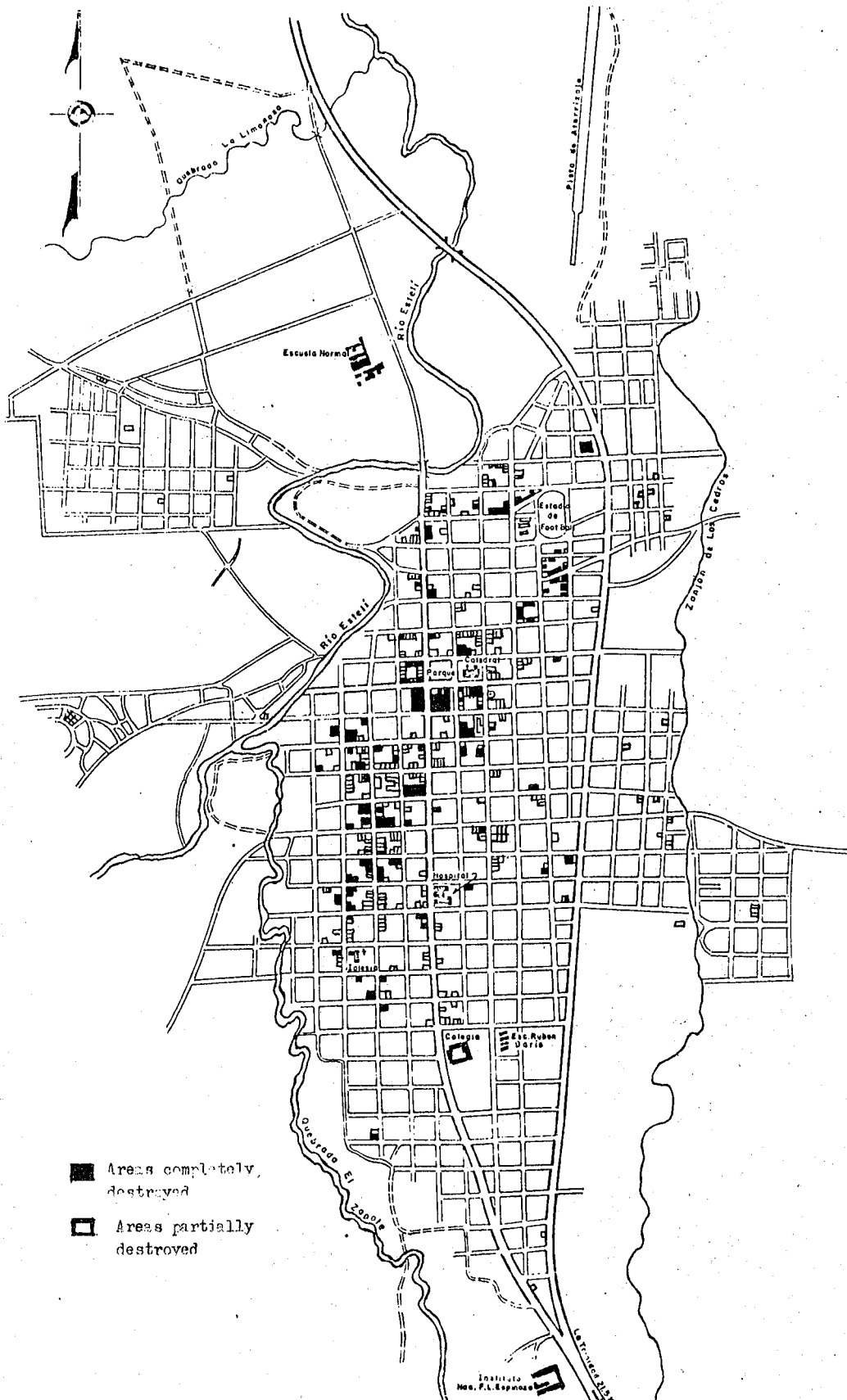
In addition, there were the political commitments of the Revolution which the people of Esteli were keen to accomplish not only because of their extraordinary participation during the uprisings but because of their known Sandinista militancy. Their political path will be elucidated later by illustrations of popular participation in local events, whether as part of national projects or locally organized ones.

One of the purposes of this section is to expose the evolving process of reconstruction embedded in a revolutionary framework with its political and economic implications. I have chosen mass organizations to illustrate how people participate in the rebuilding of their town and of their country, highlighting the role and significance of the CDS.

2. General background of Esteli after the Liberation War

By the afternoon of the 16th of July 1979, people living near to Esteli gathered in the city to cheer the Sandinista combatants, to learn the whereabouts of their sons and friends, and to await anxiously for news of Somoza's flight, and to see what was left of their houses and belongings. The liberation of towns, cities and of the country from one of the most cruel dictatorships in Latin America provoked a mixture of feelings.

Map III : Areas of Devastation during the
Liberation War. 1979.



They had achieved freedom but also accepted the challenge of constructing the foundations of a new society under calamitous economic circumstances and complex political conditions.

"All kinds of thoughts and questions came to our mind", expressed various inhabitants of Esteli. "We wondered about the countless things we had to do, to run our country, to run our city.....". Most of the persons of Esteli remembered the happiness of knowing their city was liberated but also felt discouraged when they went strolling among the ruined streets. Immediately after the news that Esteli had been liberated, those who had returned began clearing up all the waste spread in every corner. Some did not know the significance of material destruction but progressively each one came to know its full implications.

Deep cracks in the economy of Esteli

The damage caused to the commercial, agro-industrial and manufacturing sectors brought a complete break-down in the economy of the city. Commerce, for instance, had not returned to its normal pace of work weeks later, for it was decapitalized and many buildings could not offer the conditions necessary for proper functioning, and as a consequence, unemployment was created. The largest shops and enterprises had been the most affected and were the firms which had provided the most employment.

The tobacco industry which constituted a very important source of hired labour, had also been decapitalized by the former Somocista owners when in their flight from 1978-on had carried all the raw materials and machinery with them. This added to

the damage of physical structures and the destruction of the factories. From four enterprises which were the most productive, only two were left: Nicaragua-Cigars and Cuba-Nica. The first was almost totally destroyed and belonged jointly to Somoza and to the Cubans (anti-castristas). It passed to State care at the Liberation. It had always been the largest firm producing cigars and tobacco leaves (raw material for export. Cuba-Nica had always been and still was in private hands, embracing cultivation, the curing process and the making of cigars for export, though it did not export tobacco leaves. The production of Nicaragua Cigars used to be in the region of 10 million cigars and Cuba-Nica up to five million units annually, but after the war, their production decreased considerably. The other two firms: Victor Tabaco S.A. and Garlido Cigars functioned until September 1978 and were then destroyed. The same thing happened to the Robacasa firm, which though it processed tobacco did not manufacture cigars.

An informant working in Nicaragua Cigars (19) said that in normal times, the enterprise used to produce approximately 40,000 cigars daily; one year later, however, they were still producing only 26,000 (in 1980) due to lack of machinery and raw material. Similarly, the manager of Cuba-Nica said that before the war, the firm could produce up to 22,000-25,000 units daily and despite the fact that the buildings had no major damage, afterwards they were still producing just 15,000. The absence of tobacco cultivation and collection in 1978-79, plus the inadequate conditions for the process of curing, resulted in the low production of cigars, which in turn affected the country's economy as tobacco ranked seventh or eighth place

among the major products for export. Moreover, both informants agreed that Esteli was the major tobacco producer, the only place which produced cigars for export and had the most skilled workers in the manufacturing of the product.

With regard to unemployment, in the major agro-industrial and manufacturing enterprises, besides the two tobacco firms mentioned, there was one furniture making and one garment-making workshops which together used to employ 110 people. However, these were destroyed and their workers were left without jobs. The possibilities for getting underway at the end of 1979 were remote as most of the necessary equipment needed to be imported and there were no resources to acquire it in a short time. It was estimated in September 1979, that of the 695 employed formerly in the tobacco, furniture and garment firms, only 277 had a job. What is more, it was calculated that in the construction and crafts field, the number of unemployed was approximately 438, being further evidence of the acute state in which the local economy was left (see table I Appendix III).

Another index of Esteli's economic collapse can be seen by looking at the Town Council's monthly income, which before the war, in September 1978, was between  220-250 thousand córdobas. By August and September 1979 it was only  32,600 córdobas, having as a result, a large deficit. It was unable to afford the urgent investments needed to ensure its normal functioning. The building had been burnt and all the files, furniture, etc. had gone (see MINVAH, 1979 : 5).

Concerning the commercial sector, data show that there were 411 establishments, of which 64 were classified as big businesses and 347 as middle and minor ones. By September/October 1979, just 12 of the first group were functioning, but at under 50%, and only 81 of the second group, i.e. 19% and 23% respectively (see table II, Appendix III and MINVAH, 1979 : 34). According to the data, 98 shops located in the centre and surrounding areas had been affected and their losses (embracing construction, cash, furniture, goods) reached Q 51.2 million córdobas (US \$ 5.1 million) (see table III, Appendix III).

Also within the tertiary sector services such as hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, etc. were badly affected. Comparing the number of businesses that existed before to those that remained after the war at the end of 1979, there were just 15 as against 94, a difference of 79. The hardest hit were garages, barbershops and body repair workshops (see table IV, Appendix III).

It is worth adding that the market for the commercial sector contracted seriously with the loss of purchasing power among the population which of course affected the demand for manufactured goods and transport. The conditions for an economic recovery in the tertiary sector seemed slow to emerge. Even after more than a year, at the end of 1980 - beginning of 1981, an informant of the Chamber of Commerce admitted that all services remained at 30-50% of their former capacity. For example, there were the same number of ironmongers (7) as before, but they were not providing goods of the same range or quantity. There had been 13 chemists, but by 1981 there were 5; of 6 electrical appliance shops, only 3 remained, but

at a very low capacity; there were 3 restaurants, out of 10; hotels with restaurants had been 6 and of these just 1 was providing a full service. The slow pace of recovery was due to several factors, one of the most important being the general economic situation of the country. With the new programme for economic reactivation launched by the government, the available resources had to be centered in productive fields like agriculture and industry and though it contemplated financial aid for the tertiary sector, this was to be restricted with control on the imports of non-basic or superfluous commodities.

Restrictions on imports and the State's call for economic austerity and investment in the more important productive areas were not welcomed by the merchants of Esteli. This represented one of their main conflicts with the government. The policy of price control on basic consumption goods like eggs, cheese, cream, meat and staple grains, also gave dissatisfaction to many merchants who previously could determine their own selling prices. They therefore showed reluctance to invest in their shops. Also the State had established State shops (Expendios Nacionales de Abastecimiento - ENABAS) which were considered as rival enterprises, not only because they served as price regulating institutions but also because they were spread throughout the city and countryside to prevent the merchants exploiting the population settled in distant areas. Therefore, private enterprise in the commercial sector regarded the State as competition which constrained them by keeping down prices for the benefit of the population (at least with respect to daily consumption goods).

Concerning the housing affected by the war, although all the barrios of the city were harmed, the central ones were the most damaged. Counting only the houses with significant damage, the total number of damaged dwellings in the city reached 547, of which 239 were completely destroyed, 181 suffered major damage and 127 had minor damage (see MINVAH, 1979 : 43). The problem of housing becomes sharper when one adds the deficit that existed before the war, which according to the CDS amounted to some 769 houses (see table V, Appendix III). Adding the previous deficit to the destroyed houses during 1979, i.e. 239, the deficit amounted to 1,008 houses.

The educational, health and public services also suffered. Of the 14 educational centres most were seriously damaged in their physical structure and in their contents, such as libraries, workshops, laboratories. The economic losses for the ten State schools were estimated at ¢ 10.5 million córdobas (see MINVAH, 1979 : 50). The health system was affected by the almost total destruction of the city's National Hospital, which was reduced from a capacity of 110 beds to 30 within a period of three months. Apart from this the local Health Centre was totally destroyed. The local authorities were forced to use a private clinic that had minor damage and which had to receive three times its former number of patients, i.e. from ten beds to thirty.

Many buildings providing public services were burnt or destroyed; among them were the Fire Brigade's headquarters, the army's headquarters, the Social Club and the Town Hall building. Within the latter was situated the offices of Rent Administration, Civil Registration, the Post, Water, Tribunal

and so on. All of them lost their files.

To enumerate the range and the extent of damage in Esteli would take too long to elaborate here. However, different sources agree that Esteli was the most destroyed and affected city of the country and that its losses are difficult to measure. Despite all the efforts to increase tobacco production, give more aid to construction, assist with more finance for commercial activity, and fill the gaps for basic services, much more emphasis will be required if the economy is to generate sufficient employment and contribute more effectively to meet the country's present-day economic and social needs.

Reactivating the economy and increasing production

The programme of economic reactivation was particularly important for the rural areas due to the production losses suffered because of the war. In the countryside of Esteli, the State came to administer some 50,065.15 manzanas, known as APP (Area de Propiedad de Pueblo) and were organized into units of production (UPES) focused mainly on coffee, cattle, staple grains and tobacco. The present State agricultural lands constitute approximately 16% of the total area, the largest part remaining in the hands of small and middle size producers and another portion being controlled by larger landlords.

The government institutions (e.g. Pro-campo) centered on providing technical aid and financial facilities for small and middle producers, and although there were some failures in raising production, the rural population became aware of the State's efforts to support their demands. During 1980 for example, the harvest of beans (which is the most important of

the staple crops) was nearly lost due to heavy rains and a plague of slugs. However, the State provided credit and augmented its technical assistance for raising production for the following farming year. This matter was very important as the Department of Esteli is one of the largest producer of beans and grains.

The economic reactivation in the countryside had consequences for stimulating other economic activities located in the city, as was the case with the tobacco industry. Apart from restoring tobacco enterprises by repairing the buildings, Nicaragua Cigars (State property), were expected to raise the manufacture of cigars to about 60,000 units daily and the export of tobacco leaves to more than 20,000 quintales (1 quintal = 100lbs. Moreover, it was hoped that availability of jobs could be doubled from 300 to 600 in the field of cigar production as well as increasing the number of jobs in the cultivation of tobacco. By the end of 1980, it was estimated that 4,600 persons (which is about the number employed in the mid-1970's) were involved in the agricultural and industrial activities of this product in the Department, offering permanent work to those labourers who had worked only seasonally, by extending the area of cultivation and cropping twice instead of once a year (information supplied by a manager of the enterprise). The private tobacco enterprise, Cuba-Nica, adopted the same strategy: to increase production of cigars by extending the area of tobacco cultivation.

It is interesting to see that with the Revolution new forms of social organization in production were introduced in the city. There were four enterprises called Colectivos producing shoes,

garments, bricks and vegetables, that consisted of groups of individuals who were organised to work under the guidance of the State (Ministry) and relevant mass organization. The formation of Colectivos belongs to a State programme through the Ministry of Social Welfare called CEP (State Production Collectives) which is responsible for setting up workshops.

Their purpose was to produce goods at favourable prices and hence to prevent price speculation by the merchants who might sell the same products in the market. For example, the Colectivo of Shoemakers "Rulfo Marín", in Esteli, was founded in April 1980 after technicians from the Ministry of Social Welfare and trade unionists of the CST studied the feasibility of forming such a Colectivo. Both parties presented their project to the bank and obtained the required economic aid, as the government was interested in supporting the development of the small enterprises. The Colectivo began functioning with 34 persons who earned according to the number of items they produced. It was calculated that each one earned between ¢ 60.00 to ¢90.00 daily (i.e. ¢ 6.00 to ¢ 9.00), being paid ¢ 30.00 córdobas a pair of shoes. Those who cut and prepared the soles (montadores) earned ¢ 15.00 for each paid, and it was calculated that they could cut six pairs a day, i.e. ¢ 90.00. The administrator and the work coordinator (a kind of foreman) were the only ones who received fixed salaries.

At the time of visiting Esteli, the profits from the Shoemakers' Colectivo, were invested in improving the working conditions (as they needed much more equipment and wished to restore the damaged building). It was run under a system of workers' control. In this case, the workers had assistance from the CST

in the establishment of work forms and rules and administrative guidance from the Ministry of Social Welfare. The principal aim of the Colectivos is to be self-financed, to train workers in administering the enterprise and to create more sources of labour.

According to one union leader in Esteli, the Shoemakers was the best Colectivo with regard to productive efficiency and internal relations. The other three were having problems: for example, the garment workers were discontented with the low wages. As the trade unionist explained: "the main problem is to raise consciousness of producing not for individual benefit but for the people". As a result, some workers were thinking of withdrawing and working on their own.

The regulations for selling the products varied depending on the type of Colectivo. For instance, the Shoemakers were allowed to sell to the public only in very small quantities not in bulk. This was designed to prevent the monopolization of products and the reselling at higher prices by middle-men; the garment Colectivo sold only on a large-scale to the State.

All the Colectivos held general meetings, involving both workers and administrators, every week to discuss production, economic returns, and they also met to study political materials relating to the country's actual situation. The workers of each Colectivo were affiliated to a specific union and assisted by particular mass organisations (e.g. the vegetable Colectivo is supported by the ATC, and the garment, shoemaking and brick-making Colectivos by the CST) and by the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Within the tertiary sector, the task of reconstruction started with the restoration of buildings. The Municipal Reconstruction Junta - JRM - launched various projects to ensure a more efficient service and to provide sources of labour, among which were the building of a new regional hospital, the construction of a market in one of the peripheral barrios, the amplification of the Municipal Market, the construction of eight health centres and a kindergarden, the restoration of the Fire Brigade station, the city's hospital and many others. In spite of the lack of economic resources and technical expertise, and some organizative problems, the reconstruction task was enthusiastically initiated; people worked on Saturdays and Sundays and organized special volunteer work parties in order to hasten the process.

The Church in Esteli

The alliance between the revolutionary Christian leaders of the Church and the FSLN became consolidated. Leaders of both sides agreed that they should not allow any contradiction in their ideological positions to develop when pursuing common goals. Practice itself had imposed on them a clear position on behalf of the exploited sectors, and the recognition of the role of the proletariat in alliance with other social sectors. They also both defined the issues in terms of an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist stand (see IHCA, 1980).

Former dualities and theoretical contradictions between Christian religion and Marxist ideology among revolutionaries in Nicaragua appeared to become masked by the need to develop joint action in response to the actual situation. A priest born in Esteli pointed out that (2):

"..the theology of Liberation had drawn from Marxism, which is a science, many theoretical viewpoints that helped to analyse reality and which in turn constituted the means of making an evangelical relation....we are in favour of a struggle based upon reality....the main goal is not to question whether or not God exists but to feed a whole people.....we have in Nicaragua an identification between Marxism and Christianity where the former has come to reinforce even more Christianity and where endeavours to overcome dogmatism and pragmatism are strong."

At the grassroots level in Esteli, Christians expressed no conflict between their religious ideas and the aims of the Sandinista Revolution; even more, they stressed the existence of bad Christians who were interested mostly in their individual welfare and did not shoulder as they should the political and economic responsibilities that the process demanded (e.g. active participation in mass organizations, working more efficiently on production). There was a general moral viewpoint held by Christians and their religious leaders in Esteli. In July 1980, for instance, the Nicaraguan Archbishop, Miguel Obando y Bravo, made unfavourable declarations concerning the participation of priests in political affairs - specifically those identified with the FSLN - besides criticising the Frente's position, which affected bourgeois and reactionary interests. Local religious authorities objected to the Archbishop's declarations and the majority of Christians in Esteli supported them. As one Sandinista leader said: "there is consciousness among our people between who are their local religious leaders and who are the representatives of the Church at a national level."

The above, however, does not mean that there was not a confusion among some Christians who were influenced by anti-communist propaganda which spread fear that Marxists within

the Frente intended taking away from them their God and were promoting "hate between classes" (as expressed by leaders of the Catholic hierarchy). There was the case for example of a well-known woman who, though recognized as a Sandinista supporter for many years, was reluctant about teaching "materialism" to youngsters: "I do not agree that chavalos should be sent to study in materialist countries, as a Christian I would not like my children to return distanced from our God....if they go very young, they risk losing their religious ideas for they have not been formed fully as Christians." On the other hand, she accepted that "we could take all the goods from Marxism, but not in a dogmatic way as some do who consider Marx as a God...". Other Christians who listened to her, objected to her arguments and tried to explain that there were no contradictions between practicing Christianity and receiving Marxist study, as well as highlighting that participation of priests in politics was a commitment of all good and revolutionary Christians. At the end of the discussion she remained unconvinced of what some elements of the Church's hierarchy believed and from what local religious authorities sustained.

Comments

Through the media which they controlled, the bourgeoisie made propaganda out of the declarations pronounced by the head of the Church in Nicaragua. Their manipulations were widespread and provoked some controversy. Nonetheless, these were considered as transitory for the Christians had to sort out the contradictions expressed by the deeper Catholic authorities, which had been taking place within the Church before the triumph.

In other words, Christians were in a process of analysing their religious leaders' attitudes throughout the dictatorial times, during the insurrectional and revolutionary stages, and from there, to determine who were on the right track. Most Christians of Esteli knew, without any doubt, that overall the priest from the church of El Calvario had acquired a moral authority - due to his commitment to the revolutionary cause since he began working in Esteli - and had shared the same experiences with the people under the dictatorship. Hence, such a deep link between religious leader and Christian community constituted a strong tie which could not be easily weakened by the position taken by extra-local religious leaders who, although ranked higher in formal terms, had shown hesitation and conciliatory positions with Somoza and the bourgeois groups in general during their careers, such as Obando Bravo. Christians in Esteli considered some present-day dilemmas as surmountable but nevertheless of importance, and they organized meetings of study and discussions of documents disclosing the role of the Church in the Revolution, and of the leadership in the Church, Frente and Government. Indeed, the diocese of Esteli was considered by many as one of the most progressive in the country

3. The FSLN and Mass Organizations in Esteli

After the overthrow of Somoza, organizations which had been clandestine came out into the open and developed a mass-organization orientation. They were guided by the FSLN National Committee in order to broaden their participation in the political and economic life of the country. Where possible, mass organizations

were to exercise a collective leadership at each level of their structure and collective discussion of issues as well as individual responsibility were encouraged (see Metodos de Planificación, 1980).

In Esteli revolutionary organizations, such as ANPROMAC, CDCs, CORs, FER, were reorganized in response to the new needs of the city and country.

Reorganization of the CDCs

The process of reorganization was influenced by the immediate impact of local and national affairs. One such event at a national level was described by René (6), a member of the CDS National Commission:

"After the 19th of July, there was euphoria, everybody wanted to become organized in the CDCs. People had experienced their effectiveness during the insurrections. As a result, all kinds of individual came in, even ex-somocista guards and somocistas who stayed in the country. Each barrio decided to form its own CDC according to its own criteria; some were of five persons, others of ten. They decided what was right or wrong.... The former CDC members and leaders were not sufficient for covering the needs of that moment. This situation happened in the countryside and in the cities."

"About a month later, the FSLN National Committee announced that the CDCs were to be called CDSs and resolved that as a first step these were to be composed of persons who had been active for the Revolution... There started then a process of struggle (de colador) among those who claimed to be CDS members; it was a hard job. Everybody argued to have supported the FSLN, and although for many this was true, there were also individuals who became attached to us when they saw there was no alternative to preserving privileges after the overthrow. We started by calling meetings with former known cedecistas and with those who had in fact proved their loyalty. Then, we assigned revolutionary tasks which the reactionary elements did not want to carry out, thereby denouncing themselves."

"During the first five months after the triumph, the CDS represented a kind of law among the population:

to go outside the country, to move from house or barrio, to find or change a job, the people needed a reference and a recommendation letter signed by their respective CDS. However, the FSLN leaders [National Directorate] resolved to change their role and to integrate them into government projects."

"Nowadays, in each Department there are Executive Committees [of CDS] made up of various committees such as administration, education, propaganda, health, defence of the economy, communal development, culture and sports. Each CDS has a general secretary and a vice-secretary."

With regard to some local events that influenced the CDC's reorganization at the beginning, a top Sandinista leader of Esteli said:

"The first mass organizations which emerged after the triumph were the CDSs. There was a lot of enthusiasm for them. However, some more conservative elements infiltrated the Central Executive Commission and gave the CDSs an entrepreneurial character. For example, they wanted to negotiate along the available resources they had or the resources they were offered. One of the reasons for this kind of deviation was that, shortly after the triumph, the majority of Estelian cadres and known Sandinistas were still in the army and hence these elements had assigned themselves for the top offices (autonombraron). Moreover, from July to November 1979, the FSLN in Esteli was not well organized. What functioned then was a Political Commission where people gathered to discuss but without a party base; overall, these were self-chosen people from mass organizations. There was also a compa ero [the general responsible for the Political Commission], a good military leader but who politically was not clear enough on how to define the role of Sandinistas at the local and Departmental level, and how to organize the population at that moment....this fact did not help....Nevertheless, by November, in agreement with the National Direction of the FSLN, the Departmental Direction Commission - CDD - was established. So old militants of the Frente met and began working to create party bases which were called Sandinista Base Committees - CBS. These CBS comprised a political officer, a Secretary of political education and an organizer of finances. We were aware of the scarcity of well-trained political cadres, and so we had to train them."

In spite of political confusion among some CDS and Sandinista leaders, these bodies at the beginning, seemed to have displayed a significant role in organizing the population, in clearing up the city as well as in setting out the urgent need for reconstruction:

"When international organizations started appearing in Esteli, we had already made a list of our needs. We had outlined some kinds of projects and were prepared to propose them to the government and to foreign institutions....with the listing of destroyed buildings, damaged enterprises, houses and so on, we saved time instead of waiting for outside teams to come and study our situation. In each barrio, the CDS had gathered all the necessary data for identifying its needs... Because of our efforts, the project called "Esteli, Three Times Martyr" was approved and got financial aid from ADVENIA and MISEREOR [European Foundations]. We were anxious to get support to reconstruct our city. You know, the JGRN had not visited us and we were all in distress....when Omar Torrijos and Tomas Borge came, the whole people of Esteli organized a mass meeting and expressed our wishes... we continued working hard and held discussions with representatives of the BIRF, CELA, the European Economic Council. We met and worked day and night, every day. In September, the day before representatives of the JGRN came, we gathered in El Calvario and agreed that we would speak to them. We would not let them talk before listening to us....Then, after meeting each of our committees went separately with the six ministers and presented all our information....the government representatives were impressed by our agility and our degree of organization." (4)

"After the triumph, I was the first in opening the office of the CDS. There were two sections: the rural and the urban CDSs....I attended the rural but together with urban groups we formed an Emergency Tribunal to solve immediate problems dealing with work, wages, housing and tenancy. By February 1980 when the Tribunal ended its work, we had done a great job, we had carried out a census of the population, made inquiries at centres of work, checked the destruction and many other things of concern to us.....". (1)

At the time of visiting Esteli, reorganization of the CDSs was taking place in the form of cuadras (i.e. sides of blocks) within the barrios. These cuadras were made up of the facing

sides of each block. The general coordinators of each CDS of a cuadra formed the Council of the CDSs of the barrio and elected the members of the Executive Committee who, together with the general coordinator formed part of the Municipal Council of the CDSs (see graph I, Appendix IV).

According to the opinion of a team that came from the Central CDS of Managua, the level of organization in Esteli was much better than in other places of the country. They had based this statement on the reports sent periodically by each Departmental CDS and by the visits they made to many of the barrios of the city. On the other hands, when participating in barrio meetings, one could observe the hard work put in by the cadres in explaining to the neighbourhood the new manner of organizing the CDS into cuadras.

The process of restructuring the CDS in Esteli took the greater part of 1980. The leadership had so many commitments that for some weeks the restructuring had to take second place. The Literacy Campaign, for instance, was a project that greatly absorbed not only the attention of mass organizations but also took away to the countryside a large part of the youth, thus overloading those who remained in the city. However, although the Campaign monopolized many of the organization's efforts, by the end of the year the outcome of the CDSs had been highly satisfactory and had proved their efficiency in participating in all the activities set out by the State and the FSLN. After having restructured nearly all the CDS into cuadras in each barrio, the next step was to sustain local participation in order to accomplish the role as "the eyes and ears of the people" (i.e. watching and controlling any action which could

affect the goals of the Revolution, such as preventing energy waste, denouncing hoarders, etc.).

Other Mass Organizations

The CST, whose antecedents had been to a large part in the CORs, also played a fundamental role in reactivating the city's economy. On the 20th of July 1979, workers of Nicaragua Cigars held their first assembly to form their Union. Many of the Sandinistas had gone with the guerrillas but on returning began to discuss what they could do to get the enterprise running again as soon as possible. A month later, Nicaragua Cigars, and similarly Cuba-Nica, had begun production, although the workers were not earning wages. Such commitment was considered a model (data from Nicaragua Cigar's workers, and of the Ministry of Work).

The ATC began its reorganization in Esteli at the beginning of August, soon after the 19th of July triumph. There were peasants who had seized the lands which formerly had belonged to Somoza or his friends and resisted giving them over to the State: "they looked at the INRA as if it were a new landlord". However, meetings were held between peasants and Sandinista leaders to explain the situation of the country, the aims of the new revolutionary government and the new criteria for carrying on with the Revolution. Although conflicts arose, both parties formed an agreement and the peasantry began to organize. After a time, the rural workers on the State farms formed their own unions and the small-scale producers were organized into cooperatives (e.g. Cooperatives of Credit and Services - CCS, and the Sandinista Agricultural Cooperatives - CAS) (based on interview with Ricardo (13).)

The women of Esteli, who had shown high participation, decided to reorganize too, and so, between August and September, a committee travelled to Managua and by October they began holding meetings in all the barrios in order to form the base committees which were to follow the FSLN model. Women of AMNLAE also contributed significantly in identifying those women who, at the beginning of the Revolution, had undemocratically assumed leadership among the CDSs of the barrios and who lacked political orientation. In some cases, ex-guards' wives had taken such positions. Leaders of AMNLAE met and agreed to speak to known revolutionary women, explaining that they should carry on the work of concientization so as to reshape and change the attitudes of the non-Sandinista) female population. The Revolution should be generous with those who would like to change, and should incorporate them within the process. In other words, AMNLAE women believed that one should give the opportunity of changing their minds to those who perhaps had not had the chance to think in other terms. (7, 14)

The youth reorganized their former organisations and started forming committees of Sandinista Youth in the barrios as well as in educational centres. They were composed of youth between 14 to 18 years of age and were aimed at developing a party organization in order to prepare future Sandinista militants of the FSLN party. (29)

Comments

The restructuring of mass organizations seems to have taken place very fast in Esteli, perhaps due to the high participation of the population in the earlier organizations, which

provided some foundation for the changes. Often these mass organizations have been considered as new because fundamental internal modifications were made to the older pattern, and because they came under centralized control made up of a National Committee unified under the FSLN. It is worthwhile remembering that, though unification had taken place among the three groups of the FSLN (GPP, Terceristas and Proletarians) prior to the liberation, afterwards it acquired a broader dimension incorporating all the supporting groups.

4. Mass Organizations - CDS - and their Role in Mobilization and Education in Esteli

As the new State in Nicaragua aimed at bringing about a remarkable re-orientation of the people, it is not difficult to see the reason for the existence of mass organizations and their role within the reconstruction process. To make possible the crystallization of mass aspirations it was of basic importance to maintain and increase their participation in the country's affairs which would lead to a progressive participation in government at all its levels.

We have stated before that the Council of State included the representatives of mass organizations and through this assured the 'popular' character of the new State. Nevertheless, it is of importance to point out that, at this stage, popular power still remained in the full sense of the word, a goal, and the conditions needed to convert it to a reality still needed developing. We must bear in mind that Nicaragua lacked a democratic tradition and the people knew no other "democracy"

but that imposed by the dictatorship and the alleged "democracy" claimed by the bourgeoisie. Hence, the discussion of new forms of democracy raised the need for parallel political preparation.

If many of the offices and politically responsible positions in government bodies and in the leadership of the Frente's organizations were made by appointment, not election, it was partly because of the urgency of allocating proved revolutionaries in the absence of a consolidated and defined infrastructure of popular organizations when structuring the new State immediately after the overthrow. It was also partly because the existence of problems of mass illiteracy and low educational levels prevented ordinary people from immediately assuming responsibility in the management of State and non-State institutions.

Thus, there was a need to consolidate the organizative infrastructure to prepare people for further major responsibilities. Their tasks were delineated by the Frente as follows: to bring together at their core all the social sectors; to reiterate the Frente's position to the various political, economic and social sectors; to achieve basic economic goals; to put more emphasis on the task of creating militias; to raise consciousness with regard to the content of the movement's ideology in its fight against the Revolution's enemies, and to make a commitment to the fundamental issues of raising production; to participate actively in the literacy campaign; and to raise the levels of consciousness and political education of their affiliated members (see Nuñez, C., 1980 : 12).

The mass organizations in Esteli focused on accomplishing these functions in all the activities they organized. Some examples which I observed will be given to illustrate this, showing the limitations they worked under.

Meeting the neighbours of El Calvario

The members of the Department's Executive Committee of the CDS had organised a meeting with the neighbours of El Calvario to exchange opinions and to learn what concerned them as a decrease in participation had been noticed. Attention was brought to this by the Frente's members, as the population of that barrio had demonstrated great courage in the pre-liberation period and had been one of the most outstanding in every sense (organizationally, politically and in enthusiasm). It was a few weeks before celebrating the first Anniversary of the Sandinista Liberation.

We started gathering around the front door of the church at 6.20 p.m. A priest was still conducting Mass. After ten minutes, Mass ended and people came out, some of them staying with the rest of their neighbours who had already joined the group. The meeting was supposed to be held in the communal room of the church but the door was closed. Suddenly, the lights of the church and most of the houses went off, leaving all in darkness. More persons arrived and to our surprise, we received a message from the woman living opposite inviting the group to meet in her house. We all walked across the street and entered a room, 5 meters by 3 meters. It was short of furniture (2-3 chairs) and it was obvious that restoration was being carried out. The woman, with three children, very kindly

asked us to come in while bringing stuff which could serve as seating. As more people were dropping in, other neighbours from the surrounding houses offered chairs. We were then about 27-30 persons. Half of us were women and of varied ages.

a. Starting the meeting

One of the representatives of the Department's Executive Committee of the CDS began the session saying:

"We have invited you following the criteria that you are known as old and enthusiastic collaborators... the purpose of this meeting is to let you know that mass organizations have arranged many activities to celebrate the first anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution (19th of July) and the liberation of Esteli (16th of July). Everybody knows the revolutionary history of this barrio, and we are therefore worried when observing the poor participation of this barrio in these activities. Also, we have noticed that restructuring of the CDS has gone very slowly, affecting as a result, the mobilization of sufficient cedecistas to carry on the immediate jobs. We want to talk with you and we appeal to you to express your feelings and ideas of what you think are the causes of the barrio's decline...."

There were a few minutes of silence and then, a person of responsibility in the CDCs said:

"I have been away from the city during the last weeks - due to work - and now I have returned. It is true, I have noticed an "enfriamiento" (cooling down) regarding the CDS's dynamic when compared to that during the insurrectional period... I know CDSs are being restructured but I do not know the way nor the orientation to do it.....other neighbours have found themselves in a similar situation."

b. The people's concerns

Once someone had talked, there were a lot of interventions exposing various issues which can be summarised as follows:

- some objected to the way some cedecistas had come to take responsibility. They had been appointed and not elected.
- some complained of the lack of information and orientation of restructuring of the CDSs.
- others made reference to the locale chosen for the meetings; it was not the communal room but another which was not big enough.
- others said that although the current general coordinator of the CDS of the barrio had called for meetings, people had not turned up and thus, information could not get through to the bases [the general coordinator was not present at the meeting].
- some questioned the participation of individuals in the CDS who, despite doing the requested tasks, were considered as somocistas and therefore some people were thinking, "if that person is there...then I will not go."

The discussion went on, and many of the assistants participated repeatedly. There was a rich interchange of opinion and comments between the CDS leaders and the invited. The above issues were discussed and the answers from the CDS leaders can be summarised as follows:

According to the opinions relating to the way some cedecistas had taken responsibilities by appointment, it was observed that most of the statements had concerned the general coordinator. People were obviously dissatisfied and, hence, attributed to him the lack of organization of the barrio. The CDS leaders responded that they were neither in favour nor against the general coordinator, saying, "you must reflect that if the CDS of the barrio [referring to the executive committee] has found

difficulties in organizing and transmitting information it has also been because you have not supported them". Furthermore, the CDS leaders agreed that "if in the course of time you find the person responsible for the CDS unsuitable, then the barrio could proceed in electing another."

In relation to the lack of information about CDS restructuring, the leaders explained to them the new form by cuadras, and soon after commissions were set up to visit houses to organize them. With regard to the location for meetings, they all agreed that the communal room was better for it was bigger and everybody knew it well.

Concerning people's objections to the participation of former Somocistas in the CDS, the leaders agreed that it was a matter which needed deeper thought. It was on the one hand, understandable that the cedecistas should resist accepting individuals who previously had had negative attitudes, but on the other hand, one had to understand the new situation and try to give opportunities to these persons and integrate them into the Revolution.

c. Conscientization Tasks

The leaders of the CDS made reference to broader issues that involved controlling the behaviour of cedecistas. Opening hours for pubs and off-licences were established; compañeros of the EPS were not to drink during working hours and compas not in uniform, since "that uniform cost the lives of thousands". They also stressed the responsibility of people to participate in the various production tasks; the need to grasp that in the year of the Revolution it was impossible to solve all the

economic problems; the importance of overcoming personal discord and keeping brotherly relationships when doing work for the Revolution.

Throughout the meeting people intervened and seemed pleased to have the opportunity of voicing their worries. The meeting ended after two hours. The chairs were returned and people went back to their homes chatting in small groups.

Comments

The decline of participation in this barrio needs to take account of several aspects. It had been one of the most damaged areas and, although neighbours had received aid to restore their houses, the town's economic situation had seriously affected the whole population, and reconstruction could not advance at the same pace as the people desired. The leadership of the CDS demanded more effort and sacrifice at a point when many had expected that all their needs would be satisfied.

An additional factor in relation to the dissatisfaction over the general coordinator, apart from the problem that he had been appointed, not elected, was that, as one of the participants said, "he is not a Catholic [he was actually a Protestant]". The way he changed the meeting place was resented: "why change the place when the communal room was always our meeting place? You know, during the wars it was the working rendez vous of the Frente....".

The participation of non-Sandinista elements in the CDS was in fact a situation which hindered participation of revolutionary cedecistas. As the CDS leader said: "we must try to

incorporate everyone into the process". This constituted a sort of challenge everywhere. In the meeting one could observe the interest shown by the Frente in keeping close relationships with the people. This kind of meeting served to explain to the people the different and multiple problems of the country and to stress the need for everybody to participate actively through their respective organizations. The meeting broadly accomplished these goals, oriented people to canalise their demands in an organised way through their own CDSs ("we - the CDS leaders - cannot keep coming every week, every time!"), helped to explain the content of revolutionary work and assisted in forming teams concerned with the restructuring process.

CDS : the eyes and ears of the people

In a meeting where the members of the Executive Committee of CDS-B (CDS of barrio) were to take formal office, we could observe one of the many ways in which the process of political education was taking place.

We met in the house of a cedecista of the barrio Jaime Ubeda, at about 6.00 p.m. All the members of the Department's Executive Committee - ED - and six of the seven persons who were to form the Executive Committee at barrio level - EB. The purpose was, besides the formal taking of office of the EB, to reinforce the teaching on each secretary's duties and then to transmit it to the CDS of the cuadras - CDS-C. The general secretary of the ED gave first a general background of the CDS and how it was structured at a national level. Then the Vice-General secretary, the secretary of organization, education-culture and sports, defence of the economy, etc. intervened and stressed

their specific obligations.

With each interjection, the secretaries emphasized the need to raise the political education of the cedecistas as well as to broaden people's knowledge regarding culture, health and education in general. The Secretary of Defence of the Economy stressed the cedecistas' role as the "eyes and ears" of the people in controlling the prices of staple grains, controlling the persons who were buying much more than they needed (especially beans and sugar), bearing in mind that the country had to import grains:

"We must try to stop spending wildly....many persons are buying more than they need and according to our experience, we have discovered people who store all the grains while others cannot find those products in the market....we need to make efforts to lead an austere life. These suggestions are given because during the war cropping and harvesting were below normal and, therefrom, we have scarcity of some grains. We need to save and spend our resources wisely because due to our economic condition and all the losses we had from the war, our government has had to ask for loans and has been forced to buy grains from other countries and sell them cheaper than what they actually bought them for.....".

Then the Secretary of Defence of the Economy continued:

"we must explain to other compañeros the reasons for stopping spending wildly so that what we have now in the country can reach the whole population. Also, we must try to save energy and water. For example, if one notices that a bulb is on during the day, ask the owner in a friendly manner to turn off the light....if one notices State vehicles parked in front of restaurants or pubs late in the night, we must try to take note of it and communicate it to those responsible; we must take care of the State's resources as these belong to and should serve, the people; any misuse of State resources should be notified to the ED."

Comments

All these explanations and information were to be transmitted to the cedecistas. It was interesting to see while staying in Esteli, how people were informed of and came to understand the need to save and spend rationally all kinds of resources. These kinds of meetings were carried on several times and in different barrios. It motivated the cedecistas as they could observe the interest of the ED in keeping close links with the people of the barrios. At the same time, watching State and community resources, taking notice of misuses and deviations seemed to have had good results. Many State employees for instance, became more careful in using vehicles and not wasting petrol. Also owners of shops who stocked grains became more careful to sell the products according to the recommended prices published by the government. In watching and controlling actions which could damage popular interests, the CDS proved their efficiency, and this helped to give them the training and experience which the Frente were aware was needed for future responsibilities.

Some Forms of Mobilization

Mobilization to defend the Revolution could be observed in Esteli at two levels: first at the level of the Sandinista militants (i.e. members of the Frente) and second, at the level of the masses. The first kind implied the mobilization of Sandinista cadres who were organized in Sandinista Base Committees - CBS (as members of the Frente or as candidates for membership) to carry out political tasks among the population. The second type implied the mobilization of larger groups oriented and organized

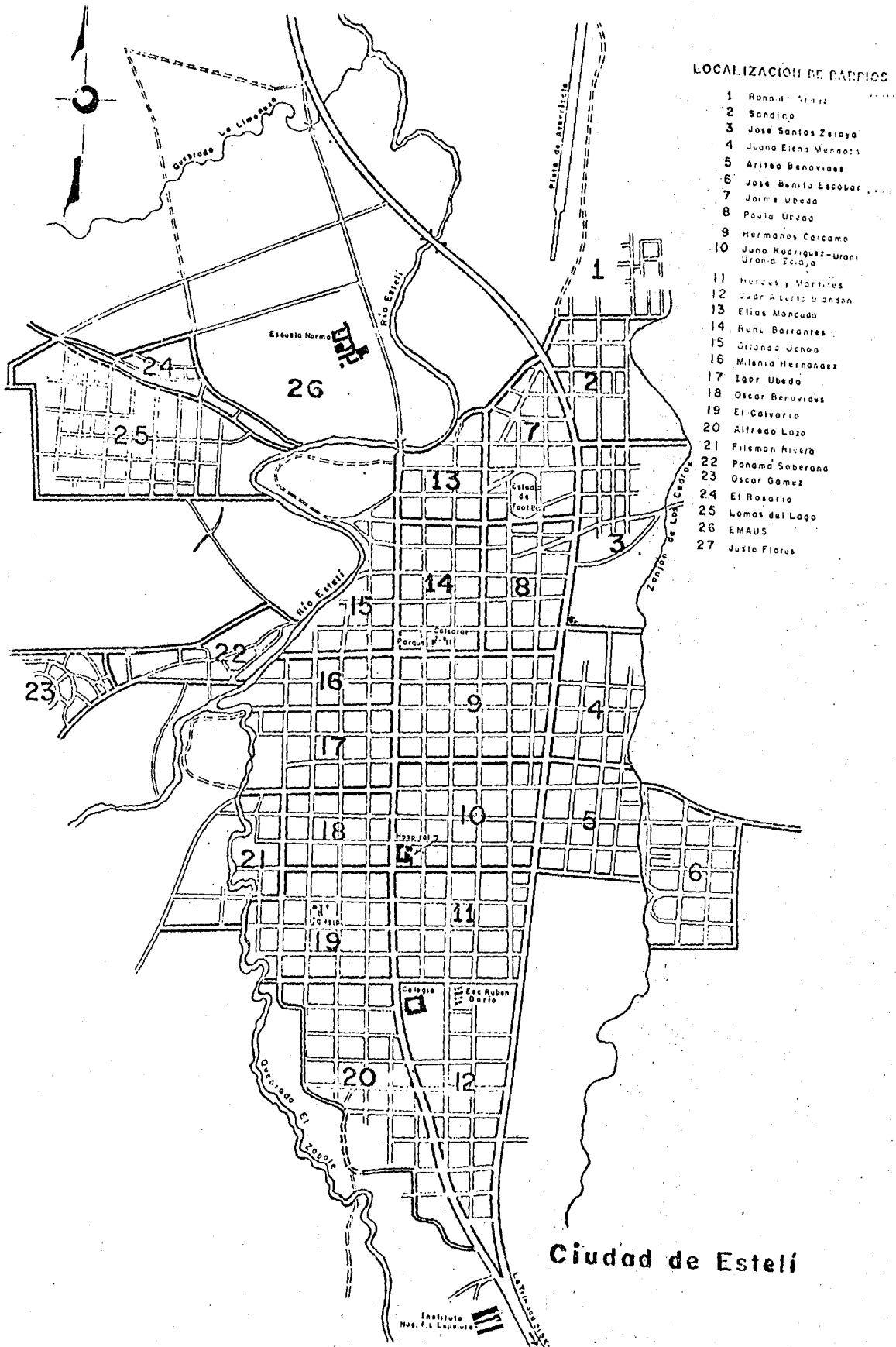
by mass organizations.

a. An example of mobilization of Sandinista cadres

Before August 1980 the bourgeoisie of the country and other groups who sympathised with them, launched a campaign demanding "free elections" in a short time. Though these groups knew they had no popular base with which to win any kind of election, they pursued the idea, emphasizing their bourgeois definition of democracy among the population and trying to take advantage of the people's lack of experience on the issue. As a consequence, the Frente of Esteli called all the members and followers of the CBS organized them into groups according to the barrios (see Map IV) of the city and urged all the cadres to visit each house with the aim of informing and explaining to the people the reasons why the JGRN had decided to postpone elections until 1985 and what the Frente's position was with regard to democracy and elections. They took this opportunity also to inform the people about the resignation of the Local Municipal Junta - JRM - and to invite them to assist in electing the new Junta. People were also invited to participate in a further demonstration of support for the Frente.

Thus, high mobilization of Sandinista cadres took place during the last days of August and throughout September. Visits to families were carried out on a house-to-house basis, usually in groups of two:

"...we come on behalf of the Frente to inform you that the JRM has resigned and there will be meetings (comprising 3 barrios) to elect two candidates for the future Junta. The other thing we want to inform you about is that in the speech given by Cdte. Humberto Ortega during the Brigadistas' campaign [i.e. the countrywide Literacy Campaign which ended in August], he announced the decision of the JGRN to withhold

MAP IV: Barrios of the City of Esteli. 1980

elections until 1985. The reasons for such a decision lies on the fact that the Frente, which is our Vanguard, considers that now is not the time for carrying out elections but for focusing on the reconstruction of our country. We support the Frente's criteria because as its leaders have already demonstrated, they were with us then, and they are with us now. We also think that democracy is not only a matter of having elections or voting in the way we did before, but it must have the people's participation....we want, therefore, to know your worries and we will be grateful if you could point out our mistakes and deficiencies because, as you know, not everything is perfect and we are all learning.....".

Some individuals replied:

"Well, it must be like that, elections should not be held until 1985 because the Frente has always been with the Revolution.....not only during the Liberation War but also in the war against ignorance [referring to the Literacy Campaign]....and also because the former parties promised a lot of things before the election, but thereafter never did a thing. Yes, voting with papers was always a deceit...".

Two individuals running a shop in the barrio expressed a different view:

"I will tell you what I think: the Frente promised elections, right, so these must be held as soon as possible.

The Sandinista cadre tried to explain to them the reasons and after a while they responded,

"I agree the country was left in a very bad condition but I hope the Frente will accomplish it's promise that we will have elections.....".

Pointing out the deficiencies of the Frente, one person said:

"I agree elections should be held later on, but what I want to point out is that, for example, the CDS must organize the barrio more effectively, sometimes those responsible meet and do not invite us. Thus, we do not know what is going on.....".

Another opinion,

"What we want is to live in peace. It is alright if elections are postponed but we need to have a better health service. You see, sometimes we do not find enough medicines for our children.... yes, I know the Frente is trying to do a lot, the Literacy Campaign has done a great deal for all of us, but as I said, we, the poor, need medicines and work.....".

More opinions were:

"I agree the important thing now is reconstruction. I back the Frente because they struggled on our behalf and now they are struggling against those burgueses vendepatrias [referring to the reactionary bourgeoisie] and we do not want to return to the situation of former times.....";

"I want you to ask some people of the barrio to stop calling us contra revolucionarios (counter-revolutionaries)....you know, some of the people with responsibility in the CDS call us that because we do not attend the meetings regularly. But sometimes it is impossible for us, you see, we have to take care of our children. Not going to the meetings does not imply we are contra-revolucionarios";

"In my opinion elections are not necessary. If the proletariado (proletariat) want elections, so let us have it, but if not, I agree to leave it for later on. I do not want to return to former times. You know here in Esteli, not one rich man was left... What people are asking is that food prices decrease.".

Comments

Each visit lasted approximately 20 minutes. Sometimes women from neighbouring houses came to gather in one house so that the Sandinista cadre could talk to several families at the same time.

These kinds of visits to the barrios, especially those to the poorer ones, offered a great experience to the Sandinista cadres. They could grasp people's needs, people's thinking about the ongoing process, the organizational problems within the barrio regarding mass organizations and the aspects which politi-

cally needed more attention. For instance, Sandinista cadres became aware of the need to orientate other cadres, cedecistas, about using the term "contra-revolucionario" as it should not be used superficially. It demanded more accuracy when using it. Also, Sandinista cadres saw the need to clarify the nature of 'communism' because some individuals showed confusion. According to the anti-communist propaganda, it was something to fear, but according to the Frente's criteria people should not be afraid. Collecting people's opinions meant learning more about the reality of the country and exchanging information helped to keep closer links between leaders and the grassroots. As one neighbour said: "No party before was interested in talking with us here in our houses....".

In terms of political work, these visits had a lot of significance. Parallel to learning what people thought, they were able to educate the population regarding the distortions which came from the bourgeois press or derived from the ideological penetration exerted under the dictatorship. The Frente in Esteli was conscious of the diverse political views among the people and realized that keeping close direct contact with the masses was the most effective way of maintaining its legitimacy as an organization which responded to the needs of the exploited.

During these visits one could observe that shopowners saw their interests affected by the control of prices and import restrictions, and they saw the Frente as the author of these limitations. They had to compete with State stores whose prices acted as a regulator for the rest. There were also individuals who knew about the role of the mass organization, but were so preoccupied with their own worries that they did not perceive

the importance of becoming involved in them.

Nonetheless, in spite of people's awareness of the limitations they were experiencing, and of the deficiencies of the government and the Frente in meeting satisfactorily their political and economic demands, many recognised they were making efforts to improve their welfare. The Literacy Campaign, for instance, had been an event which reached the whole population and from which they enjoyed the benefits. As one of the persons visited said: "I am happy now, I lived in darkness for a long time but now that I know how to read, I feel I have more courage.. We must go forward no matter if we go step by step (poco a poquito)". Thus, as long as people could see efforts being made to help them and as long as the Frente could preserve its identification with the people as it had during the Liberation War, the masses would continue to offer their support.

b. An example of mass mobilization

Given the campaign conducted by the reactionary sectors to deprecate mass organizations and hence, the Frente, the Sandinistas set up demonstrations on the 19th November 1980 in all the cities and towns of the country to prove to their critics their capacity for mobilization and the degree of support the Frente had from the people. The day prior to the meetings all the mass organizations had been active in advertizing and rallying the people in the barrios, and work centres. The whole city knew about the demonstrations.

About 4 p.m. - 4.30 p.m. crowds began to gather in the central park "called the 16th of July" and around the main porch of the Church. At every moment, lots of groups were arriving.

Each carried banners identifying which institution, barrio or mass organization they represented, and a great number of banners appeared. About 5.0 p.m. cadres of the CDS, of the CDD, AMNLAE, CST, ATC, State Institutions informed the diverse delegations where to meet. All followed the indications orderly. By then, the whole area of the park (which embraces a block) and the surrounding streets were full of crowds, all ordered according to the barrio and organization. A Sandinista leader with a megaphone initiated the activity by singing the National Anthem. Thereafter, a musical group from Hungary participated and a representative of the Ministry of Culture spoke emphasizing the importance of unity and of internationalism.

During pauses, more delegations arrived and these were received by the crowd amid claps and revolutionary slogans. Then, the march through the city began. It was headed by members of the JRM and leaders of the CDD-Frente. Behind all the delegations followed. The crowds in the march took up more than eight blocks. They walked south towards the offices of the CDD-Frente; people were shouting slogans, waving banners and singing. The streets were too small to hold the crowds. The Frente had planned to make a stop and give a speech outside the offices, but given the large number of people, they decided to return to the park. Along the way back, the people continued to shout their political support for the Frente.

Concentrated again in the park, the President of the local Municipal Junta, and Sandinista leaders spoke. All of them pointed to the manoeuvres of private enterprise - COSEP, the political party MDN and the burguesía vendepatria (referring to the "bourgeois sell-outs") to destabilize the country; the

importance of maintaining social unity; the need to increase production; to fight against wild spending, stressing that to be revolutionary was not only to participate in demonstrations but to work hard and efficiently all the time. At the end, the FSLN anthem was sung.

Comments

The manifestation in Esteli, as well as in most places of the country, was successful. The Sandinista cadres were satisfied. The strength showed by the massive mobilization gave, in turn, more enthusiasm to the population for participating in the rest of the activities which the government and the Frente were promoting (e.g. volunteer brigades for the coffee harvest at the end of the year, for weeding gardens, for clearing building areas, painting communal service centres, etc.).

In the political field, the Frente maintained supremacy and could count on broad support. One of the main problems, however, remained: the strategies for satisfying the people's demands, together with facing counter-revolutionary actions amid serious economic obstacles.

The People of Esteli, Electing its own Local Municipal Junta

The description of the following events attempts to show the correlation of political forces in Esteli together with the degree of political consciousness people had developed through their participation and links with mass organizations. Attention is also drawn to some of the facts which underlay the process of learning how to put into practice different forms of participation, one of whose immediate aims is to train the people to exercise

progressively popular power.

a. Background to the first JRM

The first JRM of Esteli was formed during the first two weeks of August 1979 when the city was still clearing up its rubble. Given the circumstances and the urgent need to form a new town council to advise the population on their reconstruction tasks. The Frente, which at that moment was the only political force capable of giving guidance, made a list of about 17 candidates to form the local Junta. The list was passed to the CDSs of the barrios for their approval. Later on, a cabildo abierto (popular consultation) was organized. Five people were presented before the crowd and the Frente asked them to show their agreement by clapping. The five individuals were two professionals, one of whom was an active Sandinista, an ex-guerrilla fighter and active participator of the CDCs of proletarian origins and two women who had collaborated closely with the Frente.

The task for the members of the first JRM demanded a great deal of courage:

"We did not know where to start. There was not even a drop of salt.....there was nothing for starting. You should have seen how we began. Someone lent us a typewriter, another gave us a table, chairs gradually appeared...Everything was dirty, full of dust, and we had no place to work in. So you see, we started from nothing.....".

With these severe conditions, and despite the fact that the members of the Junta did not earn wages for several months, they worked tirelessly in coordinating the administrative, planning and reconstruction activities in collaboration with State institutions. The JRM realised that establishing a new municipal administration to deal with the devastated city demanded immense efforts not only from their members of the Junta, but also from

the Esteliano community as a whole.

In August 1980, however, the JRM resigned their offices and called the people to elect a new Junta. Whatever their technical or administrative failures, the first JRM did its best and its efforts were broadly recognized among the population. If there were grievances in some social groups, this was primarily due to the severe economic conditions of the country which hindered the rapid restoration of Esteli's social and economic structure. "Once the war was over, people thought we could arrange everything easily and quickly....". Moreover, the absorbing work of the Junta during 1979-80 seemed to have led to it becoming isolated from the people: "they had worked all right and in an honest way, but seldom came to talk with us". So, aware of their achievements but also of their deficiencies, and of the people's right to elect their authorities under better conditions than had existed that first time, the Junta resigned of its own volition.

b. Preparing and organizing for the Elections

Similar to the first occasion, the major political force capable of mobilizing and bringing together the population was the Frente. As far as one could observe, there was no political organization which could be considered as a significant rival. There were in Esteli, individuals identified with other parties (e.g. of the MDN) but they had no broad popular support. There were some groups that belonged to the PLI, and given this party had been previously against Somoza, they had formed part of the National Patriotic Front - FPN (nowadays the FPR). The Frente of Esteli asked them to participate in the JRM. The PLI accepted and met to elect one of their members to represent them in

the new Junta.

The Frente, on the other hand, had to devise a strategy for electing the other four members. For this, meetings were held with Sandinista cadres and it was finally decided that each mass organization (CDS, CST, ATC and AMNLAE) would elect a representative to the Junta in such a way that all the organized sectors of the city would be represented. To elect a representative for each mass organization, however, implied a series of assemblies and mobilizations on the part of the Sandinista cadres as well as the participants in general. Each mass organization used its own method for nominating its representative, because at that time there was no established system for electing local Municipal Juntas.

c. The CDS and AMNLAE

These two mass organizations arranged their activities by dividing the 27 barrios of the city into nine zones composed of three barrios each. They set out a calendar indicating the dates, times and places for popular assemblies in each zone. Members of the Frente and mass organization cadres were to be present during the assemblies and helped to organize them.

The first barrio meetings were to give general information to the residents which included the Frente's recognition of good work done by the departing Junta, a broad explanation of what "democracy" was according to the bourgeoisie, what "democracy" was according to the Frente and how the current municipal elections constituted a way of practicing in revolutionary democracy aimed at achieving direct and popular participation. Later on, the Frente's cadres explained the strategy to follow in electing

their candidates. With regard to the CDS, the purpose was to elect 18 candidates (two from each zone). From these 18, one had to be elected to the Junta by an electoral tribunal composed of the barrio's CDS's general coordinators, two elected representatives from each barrio, the seven members of the EC of the Department's CDS, a representative of the FSLN and by the same candidates for the local Junta.

The 18 candidates to the Junta of the CDS, resulted from the election of two by each zone, which in turn had resulted from the election of two pre-candidates representing each barrio.

B B B
' ' '
2 2 2

1. Each of three barrios (forming a zone) elected two pre-candidates. The persons did not necessarily have to live in the barrio).

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 2

2. From the six pre-candidates of one zone, the two persons who received the largest number of votes were to be the two candidates representing the zone.

2-2-2-2-2-2
 2-2-2
 1

3. From the 18 candidates of the nine zones, one had to be elected to represent the CDS in the new Junta.

The women's organization, AMNLAE, followed a similar pattern; but because they had fewer members they elected only one pre-candidate from each barrio, one from each zone and one from the nine representing the zones:

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 ' ' '
 1 1 1

1. Each of the three barrios forming a zone, elected one woman pre-candidate (She could be a woman who may or may not live in the barrio.)

1 - 1 - 1
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 1

2. From the three pre-candidates, women were to elect one to represent the zone.

1-1-1-1-1-1
 1-1-1
 1

3. From the nine candidates of the nine zones, one woman had to be elected to represent AMNLAE in the new Junta.

The electoral tribunal for AMNLAE was made up of a woman representing each barrio who might be the AMNLAE's coordinator), the members of the EC of the organization at Department level, a representative of the Frente and the candidates.

Assembly to Elect the Zone's Candidates

The following account will describe the elections to the Junta of the two candidates from the CDS of Zone Three. The zone was composed of the barrios Elías Moncada, Jaime Ubeda and Paula Ubeda.

The meeting took place in the auditorium of the San Francisco School on the 8th of September (1980) at about 6.0 p.m. Crowds arrived at the auditorium and after a few minutes there was not enough room to lodge all the people. They then moved to the main yard of the school. About 400 individuals were present, including children, women, youth, adults) who remained standing throughout the meeting. Sandinista leaders asked the crowd to form four lines as the elections required order. They did so in an orderly way. Then, a board was placed in the front

part of the yard in such a way that everybody could see it, with the names of the elected pre-candidates of the three barrios written on it. One of the Sandinista cadres opened the Assembly singing the National Anthem and, shortly afterwards, the three general coordinators of the barrios were requested to come to the front in order to identify the voters from their barrios. Soon after, the pre-candidates were presented to the crowd and the voting began by passing the board to each person who placed a stick, with a piece of chalk, at one side of the name of their choice of candidate. The pre-candidates were five. Of these, two were old popular workers' leaders (shoemakers), one was a technician working for the State, one was a housewife and one a teacher of known political participation.

The support of the residents for the shoemakers was well known not only because of their participation in former times in the trade union movement, but also because up to the present, they had continued being involved largely in the reconstruction process. The person who had almost no support at all was the housewife. It seems she was not a well-known person.

Voting took about an hour and meanwhile people looked excited and anxious to see which candidate was leading. Often people moved from their assigned places to those who had voted in order to have a glimpse of the blackboard. In spite of the curiosity and anxiety shown, the process took place in a well-behaved way. There were just two observable incidents: the first, when a chavalita (teenager) came to vote and the AMNLAE women who were at the front asked her how old she was because she looked very young. The girl was older than her appearance and so the people in control allowed her to vote. The second

incident was when an old lady came to vote for a second time and was recognised by a person in the front. The old lady said she did not know exactly whether she had to vote only once, and thus she was sent away from the voting lines.

At the end, a cadre of the Frente counted the votes of the candidates which totalled 249. The two well-known persons of revolutionary standing won (one of the shoemakers from the barrio Elías Moncada and the technician from Paula Ubeda). They had taken 57% of the votes. The two to follow them took 38% and the last, the housewife, received 5%. The Sandinista leader asked the crowd whether they were satisfied and the largest part shouted "yes". They all seemed quite satisfied. To close the Assembly, people sang the FSLN anthem.

Another similar Assembly was also attended. It was next day and it corresponded to zone seven, composed of the barrios Milenia Hernández, Igor Ubeda and Oscar Benavidez.

It was about 6.30 p.m. and the meeting took place in the corridors of the School called "la Anexa". Chairs had been placed along the corridor, but some people also moved to sit in the yard in order to hear better the individuals who would talk at the front. The Assembly, like the others, started with the singing of the National Anthem. Soon after, the pre-candidates of each barrio were introduced and general references were presented on their persons to inform the neighbours who they were. Individuals who wished to add details on the candidate's careers were welcome to do so. The candidates were six, all of whom were males. Three were workers with outstanding political participation, one a teacher, one a middle-size farmer. The

sixth candidate was not present and no details were given.

The candidates with the most votes were the two workers and the teacher, 67, 50 and 58 votes respectively, but as just two were to represent the zone, one of the workers and the teacher were elected. The difference between these three and the rest of the candidates was big as together the other three totalled just five votes. There was, therefore, a large support for the workers from the residents.

Before proceeding to vote, a Frente representative intervened and made a speech to the public to stress the contrast of former kinds of elections with the current ones. The Sandinista leader also made reference to the lives which the Revolution had cost to achieve the conditions for building a new democracy, and appealed to voters to elect the most adequate persons independently of whether or not the candidate belonged to their own barrio: "we must elect the most capable, honest and devoted person...to prevent voting in blocks....we must try to preserve the unity.....".

The names of the candidates were written on the board at the front of the corridor, and from their seats, each individual indicated loudly his choice, which was recorded by a teller. Thus, voting was carried out in an environment of high order. At the end the winners had received 69% of the total, (180 votes), the next two 29%, and the rest 1%. The results were to the public's satisfaction. Here, as in the previous case, throughout the voting people looked nervous and excited.

The final Assembly to elect the CDS representative to the Junta was on the 25th of September in the auditorium of the CST building, at 6.0 p.m.

When we arrived, the saloon was totally full (approx. 400-500 persons). The members of the electoral tribunal were sitting on the extreme right, the candidates at the front on the extreme left, the guest members of the PLI, the Frente, and a member of the outgoing Junta were at the front on the right and the public in the rest of the saloon. After singing the National Anthem, a Frente leader presented to the audience all the candidates. There were 17 as Barrio Sandino did not present their candidate. He pointed out that one of the candidates would retire because he had been elected to represent the Junta on behalf of the CST. He was substituted by a third person with the next largest number of votes from the respective zone.

Later on, a cadre of the Frente checked the list of the electoral tribunal's representatives to see whether there was a majority (taken as half plus one). Some were absent but had sent either their substitute or their excuse.

One of the top leaders of the Frente directed some words to the public emphasizing the courage of the people of Esteli during the war and the circumstances in which the first Junta was chosen. Nevertheless, the Sandinista leader added that now that a year had passed and the CDSs had been reorganized, they had the capacity to elect under better conditions. A contrast was also made between elections during Somoza's time and the current ones.

The above was followed by the reading of each candidate's curriculum and though it took a long time, people listened anxiously. There was clapping on behalf of particular people. Shortly after, an envelope with each person's name eligible to vote was distributed, including the candidates, and inside there was a card with the Frente stamp and the signature of the political secretary of the Frente-Esteli. It was explained that inside, each voter would write the name of the candidate they wished to elect. These ballots were to be deposited in a ballot box which was at the front covered with the National flag and had been previously examined by all candidates and guests. Once voters had delivered their votes, the PLI representative and a member of the outgoing Junta read aloud the results. Names were on the board and sticks were placed. The winner was "Pinedita", a clerk of working class origin, with a long revolutionary history, who had been in jail several times. He had large popular support. He won with 62% of the votes and was ardently acclaimed by the audience. His great support was unquestionable: "he has always been a humble person..."; "despite being poor, he is very intelligent...."; "he has always been with the poor....".

Before closing the Assembly, amid the joy, the Sandinista leader stressed the kind of elections currently carried out, saying that "although they were not elaborate, without extravaganzas or superfluous propaganda, there had been full participation of the people...and this is the most important point." Finally, the newly-elected spoke, promising to devote themselves to do the best they can in their forthcoming duties. It was also remarked that the adult generation should make sacrifices

so the young may benefit. Although personal details about all the CDS's candidates cannot be given, I could observe that from the 17 presented to the auditorium, a considerable number were workers, followed by teachers and technicians. The support for the workers was large, perhaps for the most well-known one. During the ballots, those teachers who had once had support in their barrios had very low support as against that for the working class candidates.

d. The new Junta

The new Junta was composed of the representatives of four mass organizations and the PLI member. AMNLAE elected an adult woman who, although not known for her revolutionary career, had done a good job of work among the women.

The CST also organized a series of meetings among the unions(in the municipio of Esteli). It had elected pre-candidates representing the most active unions (SCAAS, tobacco, shoemakers, garment makers, tailors and domestic workers), taken charge of the electoral procedures (one voting person from each 20 affiliated members of each union), and had elected a working class leader with an outstanding revolutionary contribution who was from the shoemakers' trade union. Conversing with workers, everybody had come out entirely satisfied with the results.

The ATC promoted meetings in the peasant communities in cooperation with the Frente, and had offered transport for bringing the peasants to the town on the 28th of September. That day they met in the buildings of a school, totalling about 700 peasants. There the ATC proposed to the audience three candidates (who had been chosen carefully from among the most dis-

tinguished revolutionary cadres and appealed for other nominations from the audience. Just one name was proposed. The winner received 52% of the votes, followed by the next with 33%, 14% and 1% respectively. More than 500 peasants had voted and, according to my interviews, they had been favourably impressed, as this type of election they had never experienced before.

Weeks later, the Central Government ratified the new Esteli Junta and confirmed the CDS member as its president.

Comments

The activity displayed by mass organizations to elect the JRM was one, among others, that showed the large and popular support of the town for the FSLN. Similar to the period shortly after the war, a year later, the Frente had appeared as the most capable political force for reorganizing social groups, whatever the deficiencies one observed. Furthermore, the broad support for the Frente, enabled them to request that the PLI participate in the Junta, which could be interpreted as the Sandinistas' intention to practice pluralist political participation.

Until that moment, other political parties like the MDN (which at national level represented the main opposition party to the Frente and the Central Government) had not managed to organize themselves as political parties in Esteli. "There might be emedenistas here (MDN sympathisers) but the masses do not support them".... "Most of Esteli is with the Frente", were frequent comments. The people of Esteli often saw the MDN and other associations like COSEP, as organizations linked

to the rich or the burguesía vendepatria, i.e. reactionary sectors, which in turn were connected with counter-revolutionary actions, such as assassinations, harrassments to the volunteers working for the Literacy Campaign, and support for ex-Somocista guards' incursions from across the Honduras border.

Another fact which came to light during the elections and which in some way contributed to the affirmation of the Frente's popularity was the modesty and simplicity with which their cadres or their followers addressed the people. It was common to apologise when not being able to explain, for example, the mechanics of the elections or in admitting their ignorance of specific issues of a barrio, and they asked the crowds for their help: "Look compañeros, there are many things which are new for us as well as for you like for instance, in carrying out this election, so excuse us if we make some mistakes. ...that is why we ask you to give us your opinions and suggestions, in order to solve the difficulties and problems we all have.....". This point is made because it is necessary to indicate that although the Frente and their cadres delineated the strategy for the elections, there were practical difficulties that were not foreseen as the electoral process went along.

Electing the new Junta thus, was considered an event that came not only to enrich experience for the local population in a changing process but also brought into play the character and part of the role of mass organizations. It also served as a way of getting more acquainted with the fundamental need for popular organizations, to develop their ties with the population, and thereby preserve popular support. If this can be maintained, the Frente will continue to be the leading political force of the town.

Chapter V

Conclusions

In this chapter I shall try to summarise the main points in the foregoing argument and stress some of the features of the Nicaraguan liberation movement in order to compare it with other revolutionary movements of a similar kind. The discussion will be organized in three parts: an analysis of the historical circumstances of the country and of the conditions which precipitated the uprising; an identification of the main features of the organization of the insurrection and finally the problems of social reconstruction immediately after the downfall of the Somoza regime.

Political and Socio-economic Factors

Like all the Latin American countries Nicaragua has a colonial past. Given the circumstances in which its economy was left after the Spanish administration it developed a growing dependency on the outside world. The dependent character of the country's economy was determined by its position as a supplier to the international market, which was dominated by the more powerful capitalist countries. In comparison to other countries of Latin America its degree of dependency appears to have been especially high, partly because of historical factors and partly because of the way in which Nicaraguan political and economic forces organized their internal and external linkages.

In colonial times the Central American region was not as important economically to the "metropolis" as countries like Mexico or Peru. Spain's main economic interest in Latin America

was the extraction of precious metals (silver and gold) and since these metals were fairly scarce in Central America the local and internal market and external trade relationships developed little. Therefore, at the end of colonial rule, local productive forces remained backward. In combination with the weakness of the politically and economically dominant groups, this factor enabled these countries to be relatively easily manipulated from outside. Moreover, as the Central American countries became more involved in the international market, their economies came to rely increasingly on the export of raw materials and on foreign investment.

In spite of the dependent character of the economy, the dominant economic groups were able to accumulate capital according to "traditional" models of capitalist accumulation, although these were adapted to and modified by the particular social and economic characteristics of the country. Hence the largest proportion of capital resources was concentrated among a small group of individuals who controlled the most productive sectors of the economy, the local bourgeoisie. One of the characteristics of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie was that since the beginning of this century their economic interests had become closely linked to those of North American investors, and given the country's reliance on foreign aid, the USA's interference in its political and economic affairs increased considerably. Furthermore, the internal political conflicts which the country had experienced since the 19th century and the consequent lack of a strong government permitted the USA to interfere more directly, partly because of its increasing geopolitical interests and also as a further area for investment.

The combination of the increased geopolitical and economic interests of the USA in Nicaragua with the absence of a strong government, and of a weak economy, are the principal historical factors which have shaped the country's economic and political structure in the course of this century. The desire for "political stability" to protect their investments led the North Americans to support institutions like the National Guard and back individuals who would serve their purposes. This resulted in the gradual institutionalisation of the dictatorial regime. However, the problems arising from a dependent economy, a situation of unresolved political conflict and the long rule of a single family, were to create further contradictions whose accumulation produced a movement seeking changes on a variety of different levels.

In contrast to the situation in the other Central American countries, establishment of the dictatorship in Nicaragua in the 1930's was a crucial factor in the eventual formation of a broad opposition movement which could unite around a common goal. The existence of a privileged group which had special access to the appropriation of resources, which was more advantageously placed than the other dominant groups and which could use State institutions to monopolise economic and political power brought conflicts between it and other less favoured groups whose goals were similar to its own.

The longevity of a regime which was in fact the rule of a single family created a series of contradictions that led to its isolation from other groups which had supported them at various times. The isolation of a dictatorial regime can be partial or almost total depending on the strategies it

applies to neutralise pressures for change from other social groups. The dictatorship gave various economic concessions to other bourgeois groups until this tactic became insufficient to satisfy the latter's expanding economic and political interests. This was also connected with the effects of internal economic contractions which derived in their turn from the fall in both the demand and the price of the country's agricultural exports which constitute the mainstay of the economy.

Moreover, the accumulated dissatisfaction of the less well-off sections of the population, augmented by cyclical economic depressions, created conditions for the emergence of organization which began to question the existing social order. Although such conditions are present in other countries whose economies are similar to Nicaragua's, particular internal conjunctures combine to hasten or delay the formation of successful movements of opposition to the status quo. In Nicaragua, for instance, the 1972 earthquake precipitated an increase in economic activities, mainly in construction sector, which caused a brief relaxation of the economic depression which the country was experiencing at the beginning of the 1970's. However, once this "flourishing period" was over, it was followed by the fraudulent presidential elections and the establishment of the state of emergency at the end of 1974. Popular dissatisfaction was channelled into a campaign to lift the state of emergency which succeeded at the end of 1977. The accumulation of discontent on the part of the lower classes and the local bourgeoisie at the dictatorship's arbitrary action after the earthquake and during the state of emergency, together with the already existing internal crisis, largely determined

the strength of the growing movement against the dictatorship.

Another catalyst was the assassination of a leading member of the local bourgeoisie at the beginning of 1978. In consequence some factions of the local bourgeoisie took a more radical attitude towards the regime, which was accentuated by the economic pressures Somoza had imposed on them because of their opposition to him.

Thus, as well as more general factors there are specific internal circumstances which affect the course of a particular country's political and economic dynamics. Each country has inherent features which may not appear important at an isolated moment, but whose importance may develop over a longer term, and gradually precipitate major events.

As with José Martí in Cuba, Nicaragua has an historical tradition with Sandino, which contributed to the foundation of an ideological platform. This was particularly significant in that it has contributed (and still contributes) to the rallying of a number of different social groups, and their identification with a set of ideas which were and are compatible with the changes which are taking place. Although a revolutionary tradition is not a fundamental or determining factor in promoting social consciousness and the formation of a revolutionary movement, it has in this case certainly come to play a unifying role.

One of the unique features of the movement which aimed to seize power in Nicaragua was the very widespread urban uprisings which preceded the downfall of the regime. Although other movements which had been successful in taking power, as in Guatemala in 1944 or Zapata's movement in 1910, were also preceded by

large scale popular mobilization in towns and cities, and by armed confrontation, they could not, given the circumstances of the time, use the general uprising as the main method of achieving their aims. In Nicaragua, however, the use of popular insurrection as a politico-military process to complement mass mobilization (mainly during 1978) was widely and successfully developed.

The creation of a movement which would be certain to succeed in achieving its immediate goal, the overthrow of the regime, required much more than the existence of acute socio-economic and political tensions. Even an almost total economic crisis affecting all sectors of the population, combined with a political crisis in which neither Somoza nor the dominant classes could continue ruling, together with the increasing internal and international isolation of the dictatorship, could not by themselves give rise to the movement. This required existence of organizations which could comprehend the potentiality of the situation and initiate a series of activities which would bring about increasing popular mobilization and irreversible agitation.

The FSLN in Nicaragua was able to come to the head of the movement because it carried out specific activities in order to create and accelerate the process of insurrection. For instance the seizure of the National Palace in August 1978 immediately precipitated a series of urban uprisings in the main cities of the country. These events in their turn heightened the political crisis and raised new possibilities for change in people's minds. Hence the process leading to an uprising requires not only the interaction of political and

economic crisis, the existence of organizations aiming to bring about radical change and a popular movement, but also positive action to complement these factors in order to achieve the necessary conditions for a widespread uprising.

Features of the insurrection

Although a broad popular movement implies the presence and participation of a wide spectrum of social groups, it is necessary to stress the outstanding role played by particular groups in Nicaragua at all levels in the organizational structures as well as during insurrection itself.

The participation of the Catholic Church proved of great significance in the anti-dictatorial movement. This fact is related to the process of renewal within the Latin American Church which followed the Second Vatican Council and especially the Council of Latin American Bishops at Medellin in 1968. These events encouraged many of the clergy to establish links with left-wing groups and/or to study Marxist writings more closely. In Nicaragua the alliance between Marxist elements and the Catholic religious (priests and nuns) during the insurrectional movement was not accidental, but was the result of earlier links forged for a common purpose. Furthermore, the work carried out by religious leaders among different social and economic groups was vital in assuring their eventual decision to support the FSLN. The outstanding participation of the Catholic Church is a feature which distinguishes the Nicaraguan situation from that of revolutionary movements in other Latin American countries. It needs to be related to internal processes of change within the structure of the Church

as a whole in the last decade. Priests working in Nicaragua were also influenced by examples of priests in other countries (e.g. Camilo Torrès) who combined religious and political activities.

The identification of the Christians and their leaders with the anti-dictatorial movement was manifested in their commitment to support the struggle and the FSLN cadres. Local churches and religious schools in cities and towns acted as lodging places, hospitals, FSLN headquarters and even jails. The Nicaraguan case was the first successful revolutionary movement in Latin America in which the convergence between Christianity and Marxism materialised at an ideological and practical level, although there is evidence of the same phenomenon in other Marxist-led movements seeking structural changes in Central America, such as El Salvador and Guatemala.

The participation of women, especially in the armed struggle, was another special feature of the insurrectional movement. Although there are earlier cases of women participating in guerrilla warfare (such as in the Cuban, Bolivian and Colombian movements) their large scale presence at all levels was of particular significance in Nicaragua. The leading role of a female guerrilla in the FSLN capture of the National Palace in 1978 was a new event for Nicaraguan society. Moreover, the broad participation of women in the insurrection can also be explained as being part of the same internal dynamic of the development of productive forces. With the changes which had taken place in the social relations of production, new sectors of the population have become involved in the process. In consequence women have become progressively incorporated into wage

labour and other economic activities to meet family needs (e.g. in coffee plantations, in the tobacco industry, and "informal" economic activities). Thus, the wider participation of women in the economic and social order in Nicaragua at the end of the 1970's, in the context of the political conjuncture, permitted them to express their commitment more openly. The insurrectional movement also made men more aware of the physical and mental capacity of women to deal with situations in the same way as men. In other words, the insurrectional experience promoted a certain "re-conceptualization" of the role of women in the society.

Again, the combination of mountain and urban guerrilla warfare during the anti-dictatorship war produced a closer interaction between the urban and rural populations. For a long time the urban areas had served as supply centres for the guerrillas. However, during the uprising the countryside and the mountains provided shelter for a large number of urban groups which were forced to leave the cities, and in many cases during the war the countryside provided food to sustain the struggle which was taking place in the cities. The peasant and mountain populations, which had always supported the guerrillas from a distance, now became more involved during the insurrection not only as part of a supporting network but also as direct participants in the armed struggle.

The emergence of the Civil Defence Committees - CDCs - and the experience acquired by their members in a situation of intense conflict provided the foundations upon which the present broad mass organizations were constructed. They also promoted and trained the cadres who were intended to take high respons-

ibilities in the new historical phase which was emerging. Like the Cuban Committees for the Defence of the Revolution - CDRs - the CDSs (Sandinista Defence Committees) have now been transferred into organizations with special responsibility for monitoring activities likely to have a negative effect upon the achievements of the Revolution and also for ensuring that the government's policies are actually being carried out.

It is important to point out here that many of the unique features of the Nicaraguan liberation movement are also to some extent the product of experiences learnt from similar movements applied to the country's own circumstances. The popular movement of Chile, the Cuban revolution, the guerrilla war in Vietnam and the various African liberation movements have provided and still provide lessons of importance and value to those engaged in attempting to bring about major social change and reconstruction.

Contradictions within the Process of Social Reconstruction

Social reconstruction is the long term goal of the Nicaraguan Revolution. However, in order to achieve this, the organization in power, the FSLN, and the government have had to face the economic and social contradictions left by the Somoza regime and also those arising from the new circumstances.

The alliance of the non-somocista local bourgeoisie with the FSLN to overthrow the dictatorship was in reality a tactical step on both sides which would facilitate the achievement of their immediate common goal. Both parties expected to make changes later for their own benefit. Nevertheless, once the

regime's downfall had been brought about, they attempted to influence the restructuring of political and economic forces in terms of their own class interests. The FSLN leadership, which follows a socialist-Marxist ideology, envisages changes which will generally benefit the less well off, while the local bourgeoisie (gathered around their former organizations like the COSEP, MDN, PCA) also looks for changes in accordance with its interests as a class.

Participation in the government and its institutions by members of both the local bourgeoisie and other groups representing private enterprise and FSLN members, reflects the pluralist class character of the State, but also the existence of economic and political conflicts. The resignation from the Junta of two well-known members of the local bourgeoisie before the first anniversary of the Revolution was a manifestation of the contradictions between those who actually have political power and those groups which still control a considerable proportion of the most productive sectors of the economy.

Although Somoza's properties have been nationalised, they were not sufficiently extensive to have permitted the State to make a major impact on the process of social reconstruction, or to satisfy short term popular demands. Moreover, in order to improve the economic situation in the aftermath of the war, the government has had to tackle some of the contradictions arising from the country's economic dependency, as well as to try to counter the efforts of the local bourgeoisie to protect their own interests, and to try to make the kinds of changes which will fulfill its political commitments to the majority.

In order to be able to begin the process of social reconstruction the government has had to ask for aid and technological assistance from countries like West Germany, Holland, Sweden and Belgium. Of course, this increases the country's external debt and its reliance on foreign technology to keep the economy running. Although serious attempts have been made to broaden the sources of foreign aid to try to reduce Nicaragua's dependence on the United States, the country is still largely dependent on the capitalist world, since diplomatic and economic relations with the socialist countries have only recently been opened. However, it is essential that even within the present framework of economic dependency the government should at least begin the process of implementing some of the reforms which are urgently required at all levels. In particular, it must attempt a more just distribution of the surplus and carry out a more rational and productive investment policy. The construction of a socialist economy is considered the best method of overcoming existing economic difficulties in the long term, and as the best means of counteracting the expansion of capitalist forms of production.

In consequence the government, under the guidance of the FSLN directorate, have outlined a series of projects which are intended to provide the foundations for an irreversible advance towards socialism. One of the main aims of the programme is to strengthen the economic power of the State by maximising production in State enterprises and by encouraging the exploitation of national resources. However, this kind of social and economic reconstruction generally oriented towards socialism implies eventual confrontation with the country's dominant

private enterprise groups which naturally feel their own interests threatened. At present the local bourgeoisie and the government need each other to overcome the economic depression which accompanied the war, but each side has conflicting strategies to achieve economic stabilisation for its own future purposes. Thus the local bourgeoisie has begun a campaign of political and economic destabilisation in the national and international press and has also reduced its investments in the country. For its part the FSLN and the government has called for greater efforts to increase public sector production and has generally attempted to reinforce its political influence.

Furthermore, in Nicaragua, as in many similar countries the commercial sector is largely in the hands of small and medium entrepreneurs. The government has set out a number of policies to support small-scale industry and commerce in another attempt to counteract the might of the larger entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, this policy is ultimately in contradiction with the long term aim of socialising the production and distribution of goods under the control of the State and will eventually provoke conflicts between these smaller entrepreneurs and the government. This situation further hinders the strengthening of State control over the commercial and industrial sectors, and slows down the pace of social reconstruction on socialist lines, but any attempt to force the pace faster may well risk the government losing the political support of these groups.

The FSLN's position as the most influential political organization in the country is surrounded by a series of obstacles confronting its efforts to meet the immediate and widely held political and economic aspirations of the vast majority of the population. The call to all groups to participate in the process of social reconstruction through the mass organizations is intended to show everyone what the actual difficulties are, and to involve them in taking responsibilities for the process. Here the government and the FSLN have made significant advances. People have experienced new forms of organization, new ways of participating in decision making and generally recognise the efforts which the government is making to implement meaningful social change.

Glossary of Spanish terms

Barrio	Quarter in towns and cities. Usually of lower social and economic groups.
Colaborador(a)	Collaborator; often of the FSLN.
Compañeros	Friends, comrades.
Compa	Abbreviation of <u>compañero</u> , commonly applied to individuals in the <u>Sandinista</u> Army.
Cordoba	National currency; equivalent to US 0.10 cents.
Cuajada	Fresh cheese.
Cursillista	Member of the <u>Cursillista</u> Movement.
Chavalos	Children. Usually of primary school age.
Ganaderos	Cattle ranchers.
Genocida	Genocide; commonly used as a nickname for the National Guard.
Gusano	Worm; applied to anti-Castro Cubans in exile.
Hacendado	Owner of a latifundium.
Hacienda	Large farm.
Manzana	An urban block; also a measurement of land area - 1.72 acres.
Movimiento Cursillista	Catholic Movement; its members focus on the study of religious materials, reinterpreting them in the context of the present situation.
Muchachos	Kids, boys; it is also applied to <u>Sandinista</u> youth and guerrilla fighters of the FSLN.
Operarios	Employees of workshops.
Oreja	Ear; a word referring to <u>Somocista</u> informers. A kind of civil spy.
Patronos	Owners of enterprises.
Reales	Money
Rojinegra	Red and black FSLN flag.
Somocista	Sympathiser of Somoza.
Tortillera	Person who makes her living making <u>tortillas</u> .
Tortilla	Maize pancake. Traditional meal in Nicaragua.

Glossary of Abbreviations of Organizations

AMNLAE	Asociación de Mujeres Nicaraguenses 'Luisa Amanda Espinoza' Nicaraguan Women's Association 'Luisa Amanda Espinoza'
AMPRONAC	Asociación de Mujeres Ante la Problemática Nacional Association of Women Confronting the National Problem
ANCLEN	Asociación del Clero Nicaraguense National Association of Nicaraguan Clergy
ANDEN	Asociación Nacional de Educadores Nicaraguenses National Association of Nicaraguan Teachers
APP	Area de Propiedad del Pueblo Area of Public Ownership
ATC	Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo Rural Workers' Association
CADIN	Cámara de Industrias de Nicaragua Nicaraguan Chamber of Industries
CAS	Cooperativa Agrícola Sandinista Sandinista Agricultural Committee
CAUS	Central de Acción y Unidad Sindical Federation of Trade Union Action and Unity (Communist)
CBS (a)	Comité de Barrio Sandinista Sandinista Barrio Committee
CBS (b)	Comité de Base Sandinista Sandinista Base Committee

CCC	Confederación de Cámaras de Comercio Confederation of Chambers of Commerce
CCS	Cooperativa de Crédito y Servicios Credit and Service Cooperative
CDC	Comité de Defensa Civil Civil Defence Committee
CDD	Comité de Dirección Departamental Departmental Leadership Committee
CDS	Comité de Defensa Sandinista Sandinista Defence Committee
CE-CDS	Comité Ejecutivo de los CDS Executive Committee of the CDS
CGT (i)	Confederación General de Trabajo (independiente) General Confederation of Labour (independent)
CONAPRO	Consejo Nacional de Profesionales Confederation of Professional Association
CONDECA	Consejo de Defensa Centroamericana Central American Defence Council
CUR	Comité Obrero Revolucionario Revolutionary Workers' Committee
COSEP	Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada Higher Council of Private Enterprise
CST	Central Sandinista de Trabajadores Sandinista Workers' Federation

CUS	Consejo de Unificacion Sindical Council of Trade Union Unification
EDSN	Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía Nacional Army for the Defence of National Sovereignty (Sandino)
ENABAS	Empresa Nicaraguense de Alimentos Básicos Nicaraguan Enterprise of Basic Foodstuffs
EPS	Ejército Popular Sandinista Sandinista People's Army
FAO	Frente Amplio Opositor Broad Opposition Front
FER	Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario Revolutionary Students' Front
FES	Frente Estudiantil de Secundaria Secondary School Students' Front
FETSALUD	Federación de Trabajadores de la Salud Health Workers' Federation
FPN	Frente Patriótico Nacional National Patriotic Front
EPR	Frente Patriótico de la Revolución Patriotic Front of the Revolution
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional Sandinista National Liberation Front
FSLN (i)	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, tendencia insurreccional o tercerista Sandinista National Liberation Front: Insurrectional or Tercerista tendency

FSLN (gpp) Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, tendencia
Guerra Popular Prolongada

Sandinista National Liberation Front, Prolonged
Popular War Tendency

FSLN (tp) Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, tendencia
proletaria

Sandinista National Liberation Front, Proletarian
Tendency

INDE Instituto de Desarrollo Nicaraguense
Nicaraguan Development Institution

INRA Instituto Nicaraguense de Reforma Agraria
Nicaraguan Agrarian Reform Institute

JGRN Junta de Gobierno de Reconstrucción Nacional
Government Junta for National Reconstruction

JRM Junta de Reconstrucción Municipal
Municipality Junta for Reconstruction

MLC Movimiento Liberal Constitucionalista
Constitutionalist Liberal Movement

MCCA Mercado Común Centroamericano
Central American Common Market

MDN Movimiento Democrático Nicaraguense
Nicaraguan Democratic Movement

MISURASATA Miskito, Sumo, Rama, Sandinista, Asla Takanka
Miskito, Sumo, Rama, Sandinista, All Together

MPS Milicias Populares Sandinistas
Sandinista People's Militias

MPU	Movimiento Pueblo Unido United People's Movement
GN	Guardia Nacional (Somoza) National Guard (Somoza)
OEA	Organización de Estados Americanos Organization of American States
PCD	Partido Conservador Demócrata Democratic Conservative Party
PC de N	Partido Comunista de Nicaragua Nicaraguan Communist Party
PLI	Partido Liberal Independiente Independent Liberal Party
PLN	Partido Liberal Nacionalista Nationalist Liberal Party (Somoza)
PPSC	Partido Popular Social Cristiano People's Social Christian Party
PSC	Partido Social Cristiano Social Christian Party
PSN	Partido Socialista Nicaraguense Nicaraguan Socialist Party
SCAAS	Sindicato de Carpinteros, Albañiles, Armadores y Similares Union of Carpenters, Bricklayers, Assembly Workers and Allied Trades
SENAPEP	Secretaría Nacional de Propaganda y Educación Política (del FSLN) National Propaganda and Political Education Secretariat

UDEL	Unión Democrática de Liberación Democratic Union of Liberation
UPE	Unidad de Producción Estatal States Production Unit
UPANIC	Unión de Productores Agrícolas de Nicaragua Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua
UPN	Unión Nacional de Periodistas National Journalists' Union

APPENDIX I : DEMOGRAPHIC AND
ECONOMIC STATISTICS FOR ESTELI

Table I : Estimated Total of Rural and Urban Population
According to Department and Municipal Records
on 31.12.1977

Departments and Municipalities	Total	Urban	%	Rural	%
The Department	94133	38577	41.0	55556	59.0
Esteli	42577	25993	61.0	16584	39.0
Condega	15352	4036	23.3	11316	73.7
Pueblo Nuevo	11715	1872	16.0	9843	84.0
San Juan de Limay	10029	2413	24.0	7616	76.0
La Trinidad	14460	4263	29.5	10197	70.5

Source: Oficina Ejecutiva de Enuestas y Censos - OEDEC, 1977

Table II : Labour Force employed in Tobacco Production before and after the Liberation War

Estimated labour force 1978 for 600 manzanas*

Activity	Number of Persons	Tasks
Agricultural labour	450	Preparation & maintenance of the cultivation
Drying	1616	Care and drying of leaves
Pre-industrialization	695	Curing and selection
Industrialization	770	Elaboration & packaging
Administration	530	Supervision and Technical advice
Total	4061	

Estimated labour force 1979 for 284 manzanas

Activity	Number of Persons	Tasks
Agricultural labour	208	Cultivation
Drying	760	Drying
Pre-industrialization	320	Curing and selection
Industrialization	367	Elaboration and packaging
Administration	250	Supervision and technical advice
Total	1905	

Note Transportation is not included in the above figures

* a manzana = 1.72 acres

Source : MINVAH, 1979 : 15

Table III : Area of Cultivation for staple grains in manzanas in the Department of Esteli before and after the Liberation War

Years of Cultivation

Crop type	1972 1973	1973 1974	1974 1975	1975 1976	1976 1977	Total area
Maize	6119	8819	15202	7189	10873	48202
Rice	20	-	-	16	7	43
Beans	3199	4024	12595	8209	9319	37346
Sorghum	5247	5565	8396	7805	4446	31479
Total	14585	18408	36193	13219	24665	117070

Crop type	1979 1980	Total area
Maize	15428	15428
Rice	-	-
Beans	9069	9069
Sorghum	4526	4526
Total		29023

Note: There are no records concerning the cultivation are for the war period 1977-1978-1979.

Source: OEDEC, 1977 }
 INTA, 1980 } in MINVAH, 1979 : 17

Table IV : Economically Active Population by Branch of Activity in the Department of Esteli. Years 1965 to 1973 and 1977

Branch of Activity	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1977	%
<u>Primary Activity</u>	14894	14853	14812	14772	14732	14693	14650	14611	14572	14398	58.4
Agriculture, hunting, fishing	14886	14844	14802	14761	14720	14679	14634	14593	14552	14373	58.3
Mining	8	9	10	11	12	14	16	18	20	25	0.1
<u>Secondary Activity</u>	2293	2390	2491	2596	2706	2822	2944	3070	3201	3631	14.7
Manufacturing industries	1821	1890	1962	2036	2114	2194	2280	2367	2457	2760	11.2
Construction	472	500	529	560	593	628	664	703	744	871	3.5
<u>Tertiary Activity</u>	3542	3730	3933	4153	4394	4663	4969	5316	5722	6629	26.9
Commerce, Rest, Hotels	915	954	999	1037	1081	1127	1175	1226	1277	1449	5.9
Transport, Shops, Commerce	319	343	369	397	427	460	496	534	575	691	2.8
Banks, Insurance, others	31	33	35	38	41	44	48	52	56	63	0.3
Electric-Energy, Drinking Water	26	29	32	35	38	42	46	50	55	58	0.3
Communal & Social Services	2222	2330	2443	2562	2687	2818	2955	3099	3290	3734	15.1
Other Services	29	41	59	84	120	172	249	356	509	624	2.5
EAP Total	20729	20973	21236	21521	21833	22178	22563	22997	23495	24658	100.0

Source: Study carried out by Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria - CIERA, Managua, 1980.

Table V Damage caused by the war to the Local Commerce
of the City of Esteli - September 1979

	Functioning before the war	Functioning after the war	Difference
Commerce	411	93	-318
1. Large Commerce	64	12	-52
2. Small Commerce (composed of misc corner shops)	347	81	-266

Source : *MINVAH, 1979 : 34

Note: *The above data was drawn from a table which contained many
inaccurate totals. The relevant figures have been extracted.

APPENDIX II : INTERVIEWED PERSONS
AND THEIR SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Reg. No.	Name	Sex	Age	Previous Occupation	Present Occupation	Studies			Other Information
						Illit.	Prim.	Sec. Univ.	
1	Pedro	M	38	tailor	officer in <u>Sandinista</u> army	X			
2	Priest	M	30	priest	the same			X	Born in Esteli
3	Don Juan	M	45	craftsman	the same	X			He is a cursillista
4	Don Guayo	M	43	carpenter	the same	X			He is a cursillista
5	Manuel	M	19	student	the same		X		He works for the CDS
6	Rene	M	21	cler-student	political leader		X		Works in Mana- gua for the CDS
7	Maria Antonieta	F	30	technician	full-time political leader			X	Works in AMNLAE
8	Patronila	F	40	housewife	the same	X			Involved in the women's organ- isation
9	Dona Maria	F	40	housewife	the same	X			" " "

Reg. No.	Name	Sex	Age	Previous Occupation	Present Occupation	Studies				Other Information
						Illit.	Prim.	Sec.	Univ.	
10	Tono	M	21	worker- student	student			X		Part-time political <u>cadre</u>
11	Don Chepe	M	48	trader and small farmer	small farmer		X			Part-time in political work
12	Samuel	M	47	farmer	government officer		X			He was a combatant
13	Ricardo	M	32	small farmer combatant	political leader		X			Involved in the organization of the peasantry and rural labourers
14	Amalia	F	30	teacher	the same			X		
15	Alberto	M	22	student	the same				X	Ex-guerrilla fighter
16	Margarita	F	58	<u>tortillera</u> , clothing- maker	housewife, does little jobs		X			Mother of a dead <u>Sandinista</u> hero
17	Pepe	M	28	bricklayer	officer in the Army		X			He was a com- batant

Reg. No.	Name	Sex	Age	Previous Occupation	Present Occupation	Studies				Other Information
						Illit.	Prim.	Sec.	Univ.	
18	Don Augusto	M	50	shoemaker workers' leader	political leader		X			He was a guerrilla fighter
19	Roberto	M	25	tobacco worker	the same		X			trade union leader
20	Don Damian	M	54	shoemaker workers' leader	political leader		X			crippled worker
21	Socorro	F	25	teacher	the same			X		Became leader in her <u>barrio</u>
22	Don Nacho	M	49	rural labourer	the same	X				He participates actively in the CDS
23	Mario	M	43	manager	the same			X		He is a <u>cursillista</u>
24	Dona Amanda	F	43	housewife	the same		X			Involved in CDS's tasks
25	Don Gerardo	M	50	clerk, working-class leader	labour inspector			X		Known for his good grounding in political theory

Reg. No.	Name	Sex	Age	Previous Occupation	Present Occupation	Studies				Other information
						Illit.	Prim.	Sec.	Univ.	
26	Don Julio	M	48	merchant	the same			X		President of the local Chamber of Commerce
27	Don Felipe	M	50	small businessman	town hall clerk			X		
28	Don Severo	M	44	merchant	the same			X		He is not interested in politics
29	Eduardo	M	18	student	the same			X		Part-time <u>Sandinista</u> cadre

APPENDIX III : DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE WAR
TO THE DIFFERENT ECONOMIC SECTORS OF ESTELI

Table I : Unemployment in various sectors of Industry
Esteli, October 1979

Industrial Activity	No. of jobs ¹ previously	No. of jobs ² after war	Unemployment
1. Manufacturing	695	277	-418
Tobacco industry	585	277	-308
Garment Making	49	-	-49
Furniture Making	61	-	-61
2. Craft Industry	N.D.	-	-38
3. Construction	N.D.	-	-400
Total		277	-856

1 According to Industrial Census, CATASTRO, 1977

2 According to the Local Planning Commission

Source : MINVAH, 1979 : 28

Table II : Commercial Establishments in the City of Esteli
before and after the Liberation War

	Number of establishments before 1979	Number of establishments September 1979	Difference
Major Commerce	64	12	-52
Minor Commerce	347	86	-261
Groceries	223	37	-186
1st class stalls	16	5	-11
2nd class stalls	29	5	-24
3rd class stalls	77	20	-57
4th class stalls	29	7	-22
Others	124	49	-75

Major Commerce embraces: domestic electrical appliance shops, car dealers, repair shops, cloth and fabric stores.

Minor Commerce includes: large groceries, vegetable shops, small-scale commercial shops.

Stalls: difference size of groceries, fruit and vegetable shops, soft drinks, etc.

Source: MINVAH 1979 : 34.

Table III : Damage Caused by the War to the Commercial Sector, in the
central areas of Esteli, September 1979

Name of Barrio	No. of Commercial establishments damaged	Total amount of damage in Nat. currency
Rene Barrantes	3	7,246.0
Milenia Hernandez	25	24,375.0
Juno Rodriguez y Urania	22	9,672.0
Igor Ubeda	42	9,442.0
Filemone Rivera	6	416.0
Total	98	51,151.3

Source: MINVAH, 1979 : 36.

Table IV : Damage Caused by the Liberation War to the Local
Services of the City, September 1979

	Before the War 1978	After the War Sept. 1979	Difference
Financial Institutions	7	6	-1
Hotels and the like	11	4	-7
Restaurants	9	5	-4
Others	67	-	-67
Total	94	15	-79

Source : MINVAH, 1979 : 37.

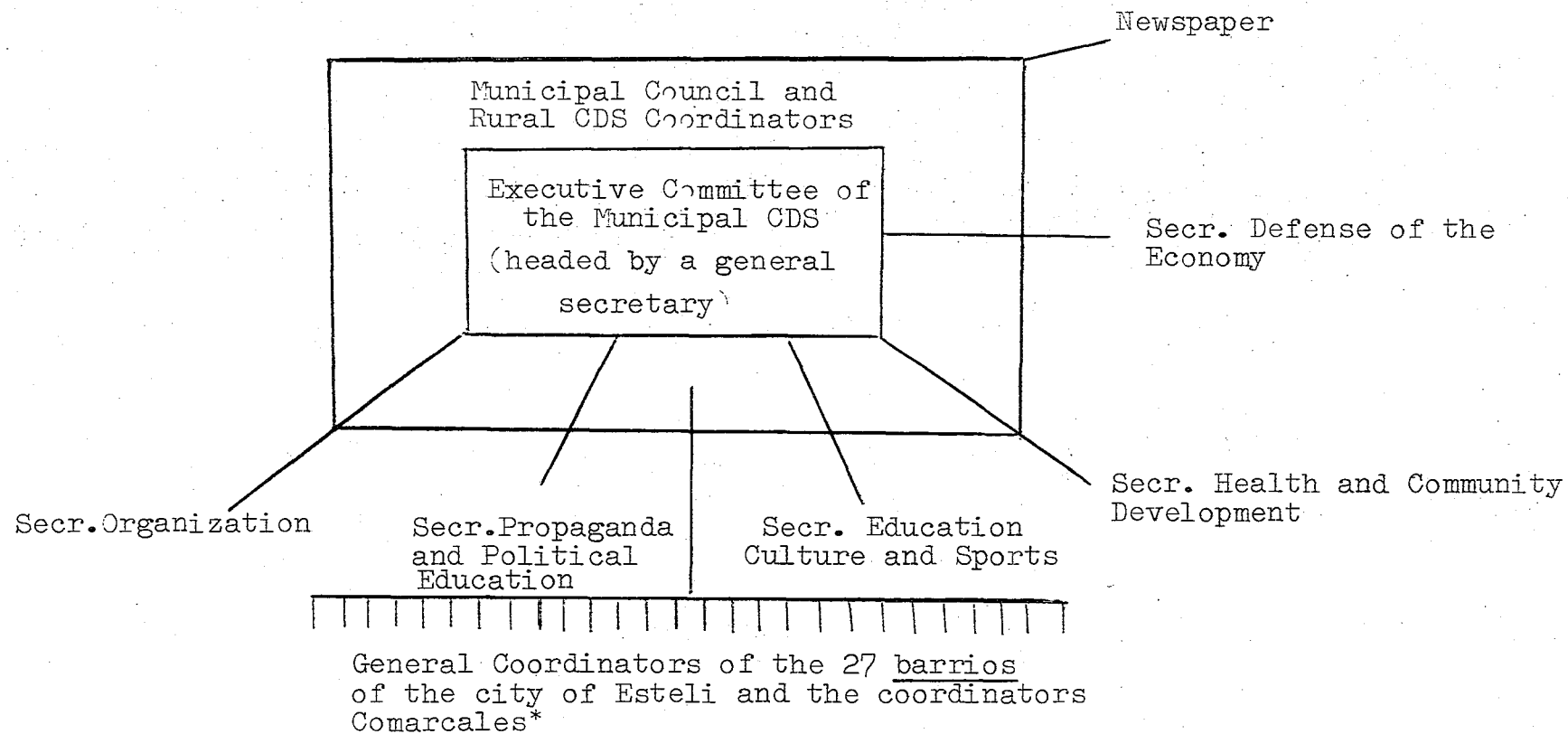
Table V : Housing Deficit by Barrio before the War in the City of Esteli according to a Census carried out by the CDS

Name of <u>Barrio</u>	Deficit of housing
Sandino	130
Elias Moncada	147
Igor Ubeda	48
El Calvario	200
Jose Benito Escobar	128
Panama Soberana	46
Filemon Rivera	70
Total	769

Source : MINVAH, Managua 1979 : 47

APPENDIX IV : THE CDS's STRUCTURE

CDS at Municipal level, 1980



* The CDS of Comarca is formed by 3-4 rural communities which have their own CDS. The 3-4 CDS of Comarca also form the Executive Committee of Comarca.

Source : Esteli's Executive Committee of the CDS, 1980.

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